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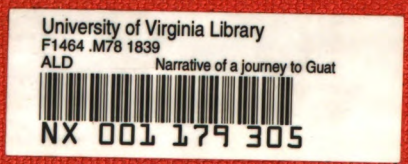

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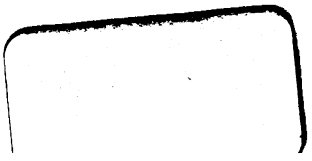

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OF A

JOURNEY TO GUATEMALA,

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NARRATIVE

OF A

JOURNEY TO GUATEMALA,

IN

CENTRAL AMERICA,

IN 1838.

BY G. W. MONTGOMERY.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY WILEY & PUTNAM,
No. 161 Broadway.

1839.

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TO

THE HONOURABLE JOHN FORSYTH,

SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

&c. &c. &c.

THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

HIS OBEDIENT AND

DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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NARRATIVE

OF A

JOURNEY TO GUATEMALA.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary Remarks.—Departure from New York.—The Bahama Banks.—Havana.—The Moro Castle.—Theatre.—Plaza de Armas.—Paseo.—The Friar.—The Café.

HAVING been honoured by the Government of the United States with a commission which required my proceeding to Guatemala, in Central America, I have been induced, since my return, to prepare the following little work, from an impression that a plain, unaffected narrative of a journey through a country rarely visited by travellers, and but little known, may not be uninteresting to an inquiring and enlightened public. I shall endeavour to discharge the task I have undertaken with fidelity, though I cannot flatter myself with being able to do justice to the wild and magnificent scenery through which I passed, or to impart to the reader those emotions experienced in traversing regions where the pathless forest and almost inaccessible mountain are rendered still more awful and savage by the evil passions of man; where the traveller is less impeded by the yawning precipice and raging torrent, than by

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the lurking bandit or the rebel guerilla; and where the eruptions of the volcano and the earthquake spread less affright and desolation, than the political convulsions which have shaken the whole frame of society into ruins.

It was on the 4th of April, 1838, that I embarked at New York on board of a packet bound for Havana. We had fair winds and pleasant weather, and on the tenth day reached the Bahama Banks. Here the perfect transparency of the water enabled us to see the bottom at a considerable depth, consisting of fine white sand, checquered by patches of sea-weed. The weather was delightful; there was a soft and balmy temperature in the air; the horizon was clear and cloudless; and the vessel glided smoothly on her way, like a swan sailing on a lake. The sea was of a beautiful light azure, and formed a curious contrast with the sky, which was tinged with purple. The foam made by the gentle motion of the vessel partook of the colour of the sky, and as it lay on the almost unruffled surface of the deep, looked like a richly embroidered veil of purple lace, spread upon a ground of blue. In three days more the cry of "land ho!" was heard from a sailor in the main-top, and we descried the faint outline of the bold coast of Cuba on the horizon. In a few hours more, the white ramparts of the fortifications of Havana glistened in the sun: then, the towers and steeples of convents and churches became apparent, until a great part of the city and shipping unfolded itself to view, with a grandeur of effect far beyond my anticipations.

Passing under the guns of the Moro Castle, which guards the entrance of the harbor, we were hailed from the battlements in good English, through a hoarse speaking trumpet: our captain promptly replied, and we glided on. Opposite to this castle is another, of inferior force and magnitude, called La Puntella. There are other fortifications for the defence of the place, the principal of which are El Principe and Cabinas.

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Having entered the harbor, we came to anchor. The port was crowded with vessels, one-third part at least Americans: the wharfs were covered with people; some busy and bustling; others loitering and looking on. In a little while we were visited by the captain of the port, who received our passports; and afterwards, by the officers of the customs. These functionaries came in their several barges; and I could not help contrasting the manner in which similar duties are discharged in New York and Havana. In the former port the doctor and the custom-house officer go off to a vessel, each in a light boat or gig, pulled by four oars at most, and in a mere simple business way, without any parade. Here, on the contrary, with the love of the *grandiose* proper to a Spaniard, the captain of the port is attended with two or three subalterns; and the delegates of the customs are five or six in number. Each party has its twelve-oared barge, with coxswain at the helm, and a man with a boat-hook at the bows, and sits in becoming state under a capacious awning of painted canvass, above which the flag of Spain floats proudly to the breeze.

After complying with the formalities strictly observed in the admission of strangers, I was permitted to land, and found no difficulty in procuring comfortable quarters. I was pleased with the general appearance of the city, which is that of a provincial capital in Spain. There is an air of antiquity about this and other Spanish cities in America, which is not to be met with in the United States, where an ancient building is rarely to be seen. The streets are macadamized, and are clean and pleasant in good weather, but almost impassable after a shower. The houses, many of which are but one story high, with flat roofs, are whitewashed, as in the south of Spain, or painted of some light colour, and have a neat and airy appearance. Some are of two or three stories; and many of those occupied by the wealthy classes are large and massive, more like castles

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than private dwellings. They are roomy and well ventilated, having interior courts or areas, like the houses in Old Spain, which permit a free circulation of the air, so desirable in southern climates. The doors and windows reach from the ceiling to the floor, and almost every window opens into a balcony. The floors are of flat square bricks, in some cases glazed and painted; the walls are stuccoed, or painted in fresco. The internal accommodations of the houses, however, are by no means in proportion to their extent. A good door-way, a broad stair-case, and a spacious saloon, together with solidity of construction, are the objects to which the architect seems chiefly to have directed his attention. The dearness of house-rent is remarkable in this city; three or four thousand dollars a year being the least for which a tolerably good house can be procured.

Among the numerous public buildings, the most conspicuous are the Government House, the Custom House, the Intendency, and the Theatre. The latter is a noble edifice, for which the public are indebted to General Tacon. It contains three rows of boxes and two galleries, besides the pit. A trellis of gilded iron, by which the boxes are balustraded, imparts to them a gay and airy appearance, while it affords a good view of the occupants. The pit is divided into seats, like arm-chairs, regularly numbered, and neatly covered with red leather, and provided with cushions: an excellent arrangement, which deserves to be adopted elsewhere. There are two coffee-houses within the building, and other rooms for repose and refreshment, besides various offices. This edifice was erected at an expense of two hundred thousand dollars, and is said to be capable of containing four thousand persons. It is even stated, that on the occasion of a masquerade, given there, seven thousand assembled within its walls. The theatre being open while I was in Havana, I was induced one night to attend the performance. The play, "El Pastelero de Madrigal," (the Pastry-Cook of Madrigal,) was wretch-

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edly performed.* One actress was lame, another toothless; but for this I was compensated by the "Bolero," which succeeded the play, and was danced to the accompaniment of castanets with considerable grace and skill.

The square in front of the Governor's house, called the Plaza de Armas, is one of the handsomest in the city. It is ornamented with fountains, grass-plats, and flower-borders; the walks are flagged; and in the centre is a statue of the late King of Spain. There are fountains well supplied with water in other parts of the city; and I could not help reflecting, how desirable the introduction of those noble and salutary ornaments would be in the United States, in lieu of our vulgar pumps. The Plaza just mentioned is much resorted to in the evenings; and numbers of persons of all classes may be seen there, sitting, or walking about, and, while they enjoy the cool breeze, listening to the music of military bands, that perform there three or four times in the course of the week.

In the suburbs, near the theatre, is a public walk of great resort, called the Paseo de Tacon. It consists of three extensive alleys: the central and widest one for carriages; the two lateral ones for foot passengers. The latter are shaded

* The Pastelero de Madrigal is an historical personage, and has been made the subject of two Spanish plays, both of considerable merit, but differing in their story of the principal character. In the play I saw, he is represented, like Demetrius in Russia, as assuming to be Don Sebastian, King of Portugal, who had been lost in Africa, though the fact of his death had not been ascertained. Having acquainted himself with many circumstances relating to the lost king, he succeeds, by affecting an air of mystery, by a certain dignity of deportment, and, above all, by *denying* that he is the person he wishes to pass for, in impressing vast numbers with the belief that he is the long-lost sovereign of Portugal. One of his accomplices allows himself to be put to the torture before he confesses that the Pastelero *is* the distinguished personage just mentioned. In the other play, he appears at the court of Lisbon as the Pope's Nuncio, presents his credentials in proper form, is duly accredited, conducts a negotiation, serves the interests of his Holiness with all the skill of a consummate diplomatist, and even nominates to some ecclesiastical dignities, before he is detected.

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by a row of trees on each side, and provided with stone benches. In the afternoon of a holyday this walk presents a picturesque and interesting scene, being crowded by people of all classes, some in volantas, others on foot, and almost all neatly, if not elegantly, dressed. A still more agreeable promenade may be found in the Botanic Garden. It is open to the public at all hours, and, from the variety of trees and plants from all countries which it contains, is well worth the attention of a botanist. There are rows of the Palma Real there, of singular beauty. The trunks are without branches, and perfectly smooth and straight, so that the trees have the appearance of so many stately columns.* The garden is kept in excellent order, by Mr. Auber, the Director, who is exceedingly polite to visitors, especially to strangers.

In the course of my perambulations I wandered one day to the market-place, which is a square, surrounded by porticos. In the centre are the country people, with temporary sheds of canvass, to screen them from the sun, while before them, on mats spread upon the ground, are heaps of plantains, bananas, pine-apples, and nearly all the tropical fruits, as well as many of the productions of more temperate climates. There also are venders of fowls, parrots, and guinea-hens. While contemplating this scene, my attention was attracted by a long-bearded friar of one of the mendicant orders, equipped with sandals and a knotted girdle, and carrying a wallet thrown over his shoulder. He went from shed to shed, receiving from the pious charity of the country-people some little gift—here a plantain, there an ear of corn—until he filled both ends of his wal-

* This is one of the many varieties of the Palm tree found in tropical climates. It grows to a great height, and besides being remarkable for its beauty, is extremely useful in the construction of the rude dwellings of the Indians in America. It is called in English the Cabbage tree, from a substance it produces very similar to that vegetable, and both wholesome and agreeable to the taste. This substance, or fruit, may be eat raw or dressed; but the removal of it destroys the tree.

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let. I looked upon him as the last of a race now extinct in Spain, but still lingering in this remote part of the Spanish dominions.

One of the establishments in Havana deserving a passing visit from a stranger, is the great coffee-house, called Café de la Lonja, where the luxury of an ice cream may be had for a small consideration. It is a place much frequented, and consists of several large rooms, handsomely fitted up, and ornamented with chandeliers and mirrors, with little tables placed at intervals, where visitors take refreshments, for a Spaniard never takes anything at the bar. There is a great consumption here of coffee, chocolate, lemonade, and ices. Spirituous liquors are not much in request. To do the Spaniards justice, they are generally very temperate. Many of them are water drinkers, but prefer this element iced, and sweetened by a composition of sugar, called *panal*, which they consider a luxury. The waiters are tolerably attentive, and if, on being called, they cannot come immediately, will at least intimate their having heard you, by crying out, "*Ya voy*," (I am coming.) Annexed to the establishment is a room provided with newspapers, prices current, and a shipping list.

My short sojourn in Havana did not allow time to form a deliberate opinion of the inhabitants. As far as my experience went, I found both sexes courteous and civil, and exceedingly attentive to strangers. They appeared to me to resemble in taste and habits the people of Andalusia. Ostentatious, prodigal, somewhat effeminate, and a little addicted to gambling, but generous and hospitable in the extreme. They have a great passion for titles, uniforms, and badges of honor, whether military or civil. Offices are mulitplied in every department, partly to gratify this craving passion for distinction. Happy is he who can mount a uniform or boast a title of any kind. Many of them are purchased with money, and at great price. There is a merchant there who has attained the much envied distinction of being addressed as "Your Excellency."

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The women, in general, are finely formed, though rather inclined to *embonpoint*. Like those of the south of Spain, they have small feet, black eyes, and expressive countenances. They are singularly attractive and graceful; animated and unaffected in conversation; and have a *naïveté* and natural wit, that atone for a rather limited education. Indeed, I am almost tempted to say that a refined education would only spoil them.

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CHAPTER II.

General Tacon: his character, acts, &c.

On the day of my arrival at Havana I was introduced by our Consul to the Governor, General Tacon. The Government House, where he resides, is a large massive building, between a castle and a palace, and has a piazza or portico in front, supported by huge stone pillars, with room enough beneath to shelter a dozen carriages. The entrance is through a wide and lofty portal, where a guard of soldiers is stationed day and night. Passing through this, we came to an inner court, and ascended thence up a broad stone stair-case to a corridor leading to the antechamber. Here are found a number of officers, both military and civil, and other persons, some on duty, and others waiting for an audience. From the antechamber, we were shown into a spacious saloon, which had all the air of a baronial hall of feudal times. We were then announced; and after the lapse of a few minutes, the door of an adjoining cabinet was opened by an usher, and the General made his appearance: a plain-looking man, about sixty years of age, rather pale, and seemingly not in the enjoyment of perfect health. He received us with much affability, asked some unimportant questions, and made me an offer of his services, observing, that though he had just resigned the command, his influence might yet avail me in the event of my having to make any application to his successor. The interview was soon at an end, for as claims on the attention of the General were still numerous, we thought it proper to retire after a brief expression of thanks for his kind offers.

General Tacon, previously to taking the command of the

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Island of Cuba, held the office of "Asistente," or Captain General, of Seville, one of the most distinguished posts under the Government of Spain. He accepted his new command with reluctance, and under certain conditions, in virtue of which he was invested with powers superior to any conceded to his predecessors. One of these powers was that of suspending the execution of any Royal order, or mandate, addressed to him from the Court, which, in his opinion, might be inexpedient or injurious to the interests of the nation,* and even of superseding the tribunals in the administration of justice, in cases of emergency. These powers, invidiously denominated *facultades omnimodas*, or discretionary powers, were decried by some as favorable to despotism, and approved by others as justified by the demoralization of the people, the corruption of the public officers, and the general circumstances of the Island.

The General, it must be allowed, availed himself, to a tolerable extent, of the latitude granted him. There certainly were many reforms to make, and many abuses to correct. In the judicial and financial departments, a spirit of venality prevailed which was a disgrace to the country. The city was infested by a swarm of vagabonds, gamblers, and bravos. Twelve thousand individuals were said to exist in it without any certain or honest means of subsistence; robberies, and even assassinations, were committed in open day; the collection of payments in specie could not safely be effected without the protection of armed men;

* The privilege of suspending the execution of a Royal order, is often exercised by the military Governors and the higher officers of the Government, even when not expressly granted. The form used in such cases, is to write on the margin of the order, "Se obedece, pero no se cumple:" *i. e.* the order will be obeyed, but not executed. This practice, singular as it may seem, is not without its good effects. At the commencement of the present struggle between the Carlists and the partisans of the Queen, in Spain, the former forged an order from the War Department to an officer commanding a fortress, for the delivery of the place to another officer who was in the Carlist interest. The order was *obeyed* in the manner just described, and the fortress was saved.

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every species of vice reigned with impunity; and in this state of things, the subaltern magistracy, if not guilty of connivance, were at least unpardonably remiss in the performance of their duty.

The measures adopted by the General for establishing a new order of things, and for removing the Augean impurities which had collected in all the branches of his government, deserve consideration; while the fearless zeal and untiring perseverance displayed in the pursuit of these objects, evince the spirit and character of the man.

His first step was to extinguish the existing police, who were justly regarded as accomplices of the offenders against the laws, and to appoint certain commissioners, who, for the preservation of order, were to patrol the streets by turns, and to render him daily an exact account of every occurrence within their respective districts: a duty, in the performance of which, they were subjected to the strictest responsibility. A night watch was also instituted, who, as well as the commissioners, were attended in their rounds by a guard of soldiers. The edicts against gambling and the use of prohibited weapons, were renewed and enforced. Fifty-four individuals, and among them some persons of rank, who were notorious for vicious and disorderly habits, were banished from the Island, but not without due observance of the forms of justice.

An inspection of the jails was next effected, and a number of prisoners, after a close but prompt consideration of their cases by the tribunals, were either restored to liberty, or sentenced to various punishments. A class of convicts, whom the law had condemned to an unprofitable confinement, were at the same time drawn forth from their cells, and made to labour in the public works; much to their own advantage, from their being allowed a small stipend, and to that of society, from the service thus rendered to it.

The public hospitals, being in a most lamentable state from the mismanagement of their resources, and other causes, were also made the subject of strict investigation:

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the most salutary reforms were effected in them; the condition of the patients was much improved; and a right administration of the funds secured by the appointment of trusty officers.

The salubrity of the city, and its safety, were also attended to by the adoption of measures for keeping the streets clean, and for lighting them during the night.

The military class, whose habits had become unsoldierly and lax, were subjected to a wholesome discipline: but their pay was more punctual; their food and clothing were of better quality; and their discharge, after the expiration of their time of service, was regularly accorded. A partial removal from some of the regiments was, at the same time, effected, of officers whose conduct or opinions had rendered them obnoxious. The same policy was extended to the civil branches of the administration, where officers who had proved unfit or unfaithful, were superseded by men of integrity and talent.

By these means, and by a resort to measures of prevention, rather than by the infliction of punishments, the aspect of things in Havana was soon completely changed; a stop was put to crimes and abuses of various kinds; peace and order were restored; and the inhabitants were made to feel secure in their property and persons.

To enumerate all the acts of the administration of Gen. Tacon, would be to incur prolixity. Yet some notice of the public works of which he was either the promoter or the author, may not be uninteresting.

A fish market on a large scale was erected by him near the sea, provided with water-courses to preserve it in a cleanly state, and marble slabs for laying out the fish. The expense of this work, it is said, will be compensated, after a certain number of years, by an annual income to the Corporation of seven thousand dollars.

Two other market-places were also established for the sale of meat.

The jails were in a condition that called loudly for a

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reform: a new one, of vast dimensions, was accordingly commenced in the suburbs of the city, and in an airy situation; the lower part, capable of containing two thousand persons, to be occupied by the prisoners—the sexes in separate divisions—and the safe-keeping of the whole to be made compatible with a reasonable degree of comfort; the upper part, to serve as a barracks, calculated to accommodate twelve hundred soldiers.

The necessity of an adequate mole, or wharf, for the exclusive use of persons landing or embarking, had been often represented. The work was immediately commenced, and, with the aid of a voluntary contribution of four thousand dollars by the merchants, was successfully brought to a close.

The enclosure of a large space of ground for the exercise of the troops, was another of his public works. This is denominated "El Campo de Marte;" and is in the form of a parallelogram, encompassed by an iron railing, representing lances. At each of the four sides is a conspicuous iron gate, surmounted by military trophies, which serve as ornaments, while they designate the nature of the place.

The principal access to the city being through a gate, called "Puerta de Monserrate," which had a mean appearance, a new gate was erected in the best style of architecture; and over the moat, in front of it, was thrown a fine stone bridge of eleven arches, with a raised pavement on each side for the use of passengers.

Of the Theatre and the Paseo, both which he constructed and allowed to be called by his name, mention has been already made.

These, and other objects of public utility, both in the capital and in other parts of the Island, as well as the Governor's numerous other reforms and improvements, were accomplished without any addition of expense to the public, but simply by a right administration and application of the ordinary resources.

If credit is due to him for this, it is equally so for his

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stern impartiality in the dispensation of justice, his disinterestedness, his integrity, and the protection extended by him to foreigners, especially Americans. He was accessible at proper times to the lowest as well as the highest. An application to him for redress on just grounds, was never made in vain. He was as ready to reward as to punish; but in all cases he exacted an implicit obedience to his will. To do anything *à la Tacon*, became a common saying, and meant a fearless and summary mode of proceeding.

Although he had a number of friends, General Tacon—as must be the case with any man in a similar situation—had a host of enemies, many of whom were men of note and standing in society. By these, every exertion was made, both in the Island and elsewhere, to misrepresent his measures, and to effect his downfall. It was about four years after the assumption of the command, that he was succeeded by General Erpeleta. Whether this appointment was made in compliance with the wishes of his opponents, or in consequence of a voluntary resignation, it has not been in my power to ascertain. It has been insinuated, that on the occasion of a call on the Island by the Spanish Government for a subsidy of two millions and a half of dollars, the Intendent, who was inimical to the General, represented to the Court that the money would be forthcoming if a new Governor were appointed. On the other hand, it is asserted that Gen. Tacon was anxious to return to Spain on account of the delicate state of his health, and, on that plea, had more than once solicited permission to send in his resignation.

One more remark before disposing of the subject. It is possible that in the exercise of his authority, the General may in some few instances have exceeded the bounds of moderation; but it is also certain, that he conferred on the Island great and lasting benefits. His name will be memorable there for years to come, and will be cherished by the majority of the inhabitants with gratitude and respect.

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CHAPTER III.

Departure from Havana.—Truxillo.—The Commandant.—A Military Household.—The Dinner.—Incredulity of Mine Host.—Civility of a Native.

I HAD waited now four days in Havana for an opportunity to proceed to some port in Central America, when I was informed that an American vessel was on the point of sailing for Truxillo, in the Bay of Honduras, from whence, it was believed, I should find no difficulty in proceeding by land to Guatemala, the capital of the country. I accordingly embarked at once, and found myself again tossing on the ocean, and at the mercy of the elements.

With every thing in point of accommodations and provisions, that could be desired, with a worthy and obliging captain, and a fast sailing vessel, it required no great degree of courage to encounter once more the disagreeables of a sea voyage. There was also the moral certainty of a quick passage; for as our course was westward, the mild airs of the trade wind could scarcely fail us before we reached our destination.

On the 25th of April, the fourth day after our departure from Havana, we came in sight of the Island of Bonaca, situated immediately opposite to Truxillo; and in the afternoon of the same day, we cast anchor in the harbor of that port.

The town of Truxillo stands close by the sea, at the foot of a lofty mountain crowned with trees, and clothed with a rich vegetation reaching to the very edge of the water. It is an isolated solitary place, of antiquated appearance, with few houses, and those in a ruinous condition. The objects most prominent at first view, are a fort mounted

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by a few guns, an old dismantled building, which I was told had been the mansion of the Governors in better times, and a church with only half a roof. A little apart from the town, there is a cluster of huts, twenty or thirty in number, inhabited by a little colony of negroes, called *Caribes*, a denomination for which I could find no reason, since they certainly have nothing in common with the Indians of the Caribbee Islands.

We were not long in receiving the visit of the Custom-house officer, who came off to us in a little canoe paddled by a couple of blacks. When this officer was leaving us, after having accomplished the objects of his visit, I handed him my passport, and requested him to obtain leave for my landing on the following day, if not contrary to the regulations of the place. The next morning, early—for we had scarcely finished breakfast—the same person came again, and delivered me a message from the Commandant of Truxillo, stating that I could go on shore as soon as might be agreeable to me, and that that officer, in the expectation of my landing at once, was then waiting on the beach to receive me. This mark of attention left me no choice, and I hastily changed my dress, while my friend, the Captain, ordered the boat to be manned with four oars, her awning to be rigged, and a flag to be spread on the stern-sheets.

On reaching the shore, I was met by the Commandant, who gave me his hand, and welcomed me with all the gravity and courteousness of an old Castilian. He was accompanied by the *Ministro de Hacienda*, or Collector of the Customs, and by some other persons, to whom he introduced me. In addressing him, I used the style of *Señoria*, instead of *usted*, which, however, he modestly declined admitting.

The Commandant was about 37 years of age; rather tall, and muscular, though of slender form. He had an expressive countenance, with features strongly marked, dark eyes, black hair, and thick eye-brows. He was

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somewhat sun-burnt, and had a scar near a corner of his mouth; but, altogether, he was a fine, soldierly looking man. His dress was a blue frock coat with military buttons, gold epaulettes a little tarnished, a sword, and a cocked hat, with a plume of blue and white feathers, the national colours of Central America.

We now all proceeded together to the house of the Commandant. As the heat of the sun was oppressive, he insisted on my taking his umbrella, and, on my accepting it, turned, and without any ceremony, took another for himself from the hands of one of his suite. On coming into the house, he said he expected I would make it my home during my residence in Truxillo; but with many thanks for his kind offer, I declined accepting it, saying that while the vessel that had brought me was in port, I proposed retaining my quarters there. He then requested I would at least dine with him that day; and as the sincerity of this invitation was quite apparent, I accepted it with pleasure. The hour appointed being three o'clock—a very fashionable one in Truxillo, and, as I afterwards learnt, some two hours later than the usual dinner hour of my host—I took my leave, and returned on board to pass the time, as the heat, even at that early hour of the morning, was too great to permit my walking about on shore.

The house of my new friend was a good sized building of solid masonry. It consisted of one large room, formed by the four walls, without any division into apartments; and above, instead of ceiling, were the rafters of the roof. On one side was the street door, with two windows grated with iron bars; on the other side, another, but smaller door, opening into the esplanade of the fort, where a swarthy sentinel was pacing to and fro with a straw hat, no jacket, and a rusty firelock on his shoulder. The floor was paved with flat tiles, and covered here and there with little straw mats of a kind peculiar to the country. This room constituted the whole of the establishment, with the

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exception of the kitchen. It served for parlour, bed-chamber, dining-room, and office. And well it might; for there was the sofa for the reception of visitors, a substantial cedar table for dining, a bed to sleep in, and a desk, with writing apparatus, for the transaction of business. The bedstead was a very neat one, of wrought iron, provided with a handsome mosquito net, and was placed on a platform which raised it about two feet from the floor. A military saddle in one corner of the room, a cavalry sabre in another, and a pair of pistols hanging from the wall, gave a military and picturesque character to this primitive *menage*, which had very much the appearance of a guard-house.

At the appointed hour I returned to the house to dine, where I found the Ministro, and another person, who had also been invited. Where the dishes were prepared I cannot conjecture. I can only say, that they were brought in from the street. The first placed on the table was a good soup, which was followed by the inevitable *olla* of the Spaniards, consisting of beef, mutton, and pork, with an abundant accompaniment of vegetables, served up together. Then came a dish of rice, cooked *à la Valenciana*, and tolerably saturated with oil, which, however, did not prevent my finding it very good. Some beef *à la mode* was then served up, that smacked a little of garlic, but which I had no objection to on that account. The next dish contained a good sized fowl and a small chicken, both together, and side by side, like mother and daughter. A quantity of vegetables—plantains, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes—all in the same plate, were then placed on the table; and, finally, came a pudding, which terminated the dinner.

My appetite, which was unusually good, from my having suffered a little from sea-sickness, allowed of my eating more or less of every dish that was presented. The Commandant was much pleased by my observing, that he ought not to be surprised at my eating so much, when

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so good a dinner was set before me. And good it really was, though not in the most refined style of cooking. The only thing I was unable to relish was the pudding. This unfortunate dish had no doubt been got up expressly for the occasion, and as something peculiarly adapted to my taste; and on my renouncing it, the disappointment of mine host was distressingly apparent. The desert consisted of fruit and sweetmeats, and then were brought in segars and coffee.

We were attended at table by soldiers in no small number, who performed the part of waiters, and I verily believe that half of the little garrison of Truxillo was that day in requisition for our service.

The conversation during dinner turned on topics chiefly relating to the United States; a country that seemed to have excited the curiosity of the Commandant, but of which he possessed only a slight degree of knowledge. I replied to many of his questions on this subject; but when I stated to him distinctly the population, commerce, and resources of our Republic, the progress of the arts, and the facilities of communication by land and water, he would smile, shake his head, and cast a meaning look at the Ministro, as much to say that he was not to be imposed on. This, though I was relating nothing but the truth, embarrassed me, and made me feel as if I had been detected in using the privilege of a traveller. I thought to extricate myself from this awkward position, by reducing my subsequent statements to the standard of his belief. Accordingly, I relieved the ship Pennsylvania of no inconsiderable weight, by reducing her hundred and forty-eight guns to one hundred. The rate of travelling in rail cars I stated to be from fifteen to twenty miles, instead of from twenty to thirty. I even curtailed the amount of the national revenue, and actually purloined the United States of ten or a dozen millions.

This was not the only occasion on which, in relation to the same subject, I had to combat the incredulity of the

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natives; it was a difficulty of frequent occurrence in the sequel.

Having taken leave of the Commandant for that day, I rambled about the town, which I was the more curious to view, as being the first I had arrived at in the country. The principal street—and strictly speaking, the only one, for the others scarcely deserve the name—extends from one end of the town to the other, and is paved. The houses for the most part are but one story high, and their sombre, dilapidated appearance, together with the grass-grown pavement, impart to the place a melancholy air of abandonment. It has at the same time something romantic in its situation, being enclosed by mountains, and embosomed in an exuberant vegetation, which the efforts of man seem to have been unable to check. There is scarcely any open ground in the vicinity, except here and there a cultivated spot, where the plantain, the yucca, and a little corn, are raised for individual consumption. As the woods afford a rich pasture, the cattle are good, and milk is abundant; and as the soil, by its fertility, liberally repays the little labour bestowed on it, the very moderate wants of the inhabitants are easily supplied.

In walking the streets I was stared at by both sexes, who would whisper, and point at me, as I passed. The arrival of a stranger seemed to be an event, a little epoch in the annals of Truxillo. I observed some pretty faces and graceful figures among the females, but I am not sure that I saw a real white complexion; for such as were not Indians, or mulattoes, were so tanned by the sun, as to make it difficult to distinguish them from the others. Both sexes wore nothing but linen or cotton, and could not be more lightly clad, especially the women, who, from a sense of propriety, would throw a kerchief round their necks as I approached.

On my way back to the beach, I called at the house of a merchant for whom I had brought a letter of introduction. In the course of my visit, my eye was struck with

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some fine leopard skins, in his magazine; which I examined attentively, expressing my admiration of their size and beauty. The merchant said nothing, but soon after we had parted, and just as I was stepping into the boat, I was overtaken by one of his servants, bringing one of the finest of the skins. "This," said he, "is a *corta fineza* (a small present,) which my master desires you to accept."

In Spanish America, as in Old Spain, it is considered a matter of course, according to the code of politeness, to offer a person any thing for which he expresses an admiration; it is equally a matter of course to decline such offers. In the present instance, however, the manner in which the present was sent after me, showed that it was made in earnest, and to decline it would have been considered a slight. I accepted it, therefore, without hesitation, and recorded it in my memory to the credit of the courtesy and hospitality of the good people of Truxillo.

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CHAPTER IV.

Remarks on Truxillo.—A Ramble in the Woods.

THE town of Truxillo was, in former times, a place of some importance, both in a military and commercial point of view. It contained a considerable garrison, and the ruins of extensive barracks may yet be seen there. It carried on a flourishing trade with the metropolis, the manufactures of which were exchanged for the products of the country. Of these products, the principal are mahogany, cedar, and other woods, sarsaparilla, hides, and tallow. There are also some mines of gold in the neighbourhood, which, under proper management, might be worked with a profit. The place, however, has long been on the decline; and its prosperity is not likely to return in many years. Its population, which now does not much exceed a thousand souls, was formerly twice or three times that amount. While I was there, our brig was the only vessel in port; and such was the scarcity of money, that the captain had to take articles he was in no need of in payment of the small part of the cargo he had disposed of. Even the few soldiers of the garrison had to be supported by the daily contributions of the merchants.

During my stay in Truxillo I took a ramble in the woods, accompanied by the captain of the vessel. There is a brook in the neighborhood of the town which pursues a winding course through the woods, and among the rocks, till it falls into the sea: we resolved to explore its banks as far as circumstances might permit. We sat out, accordingly, each of us armed with a stout stick, in the apprehen-

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sion of encountering snakes. Indeed, so exaggerated were the accounts I had received of the number of these reptiles infesting the woods, that I had conceived it impossible to move a step without danger of being attacked by them.

As we proceeded on our excursion I was agreeably surprised by the beauty of the scenery. The size and loftiness of the trees, some of them in blossom, and the deep verdure of their foliage, surpassed anything I had ever seen of the kind. There was the tamarind tree, the wild lemon, loaded with fruit, and the sassafras. There, too, was the mahogany tree, which, like the sassafras, furnishes a staple commodity of the country; and a variety of other trees, with whose properties and names we were wholly unacquainted. There was a vast number of plants also, that seemed to me curious and well worth the attention of a botanist. Parrots, pelicans, and other birds of brilliant plumage, were flying all around us; there were singing birds among the trees; while, in the limpid waters of the brook, might be seen, now and then, the silvery sides of a fish glistening in the sun, as it darted across the stream. The leafy branches of the trees, overhanging the water from either bank, formed, in many places, a delightful shade. The brook sometimes rushed and foamed noisily among groups of rocks or through narrow passes, and at other times glided peacefully on, an almost imperceptible current. At one place a little bay was formed, deep and cool, where the smooth and placid surface of the water, which was beautifully transparent, reflected, as in a mirror, the overhanging trees. It was impossible not to be affected by the solitude and beauty of the scene: the charm was felt and acknowledged by my companion, as well as by myself. A pleasant breeze, blowing at the time, effectually prevented our being annoyed by mosquitoes; and, singular as it seemed to me, we met with no snake, nor any dangerous animal, in our path.

After continuing for more than an hour along the banks of the brook, our progress was arrested by the density of

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the trees and bushes. On retracing our steps, we discovered under a bank a little canoe, fastened to the roots of a tree. The idea of making our homeward trip by water immediately suggested itself; the canoe had neither oars nor paddles, but the captain tore off the branch of a tree, to serve as a pole. We now got into the canoe, which was barely capable of containing two persons, and cast her loose. Our situation much resembled that of the illustrious knight of La Mancha, and his squire Sancho, when they got into a boat to reconnoitre a water-mill which they had mistaken for an enchanted castle.

It required no small degree of address on the part of the captain to navigate our little bark with his pole, so as to keep her clear of the obstacles and dangers that surrounded her. At one time she would come within an inch of dashing her frail sides against a rock; at another, she would drift close under a bank overhung with trees, and bring our heads in contact with the branches: now she would get into an eddy, and, turning with her side to the stream, be on the point of capsizing; and then perhaps we ran aground, which obliged us to get out to push her off. At length, however, the navigation of the brook was successfully performed, and the voyage brought to a close without any accident.

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CHAPTER V.

Unpleasant News.—Carrera.—Departure for Balize.—Troubles of a Night at Sea.—Sketch of Balize.

From the information I obtained, on my arrival at Truxillo, I found that I had taken a wrong step in coming thither. The journey from that place to Guatemala could not be performed in less than thirty days; whereas, had I gone to Izabal, a port at the head of the Bay of Honduras, nine or ten days would have been sufficient. There was no alternative, therefore, but to proceed to Izabal; and to get there, it would be necessary first to go to Balize, an English settlement in that neighbourhood. An opportunity for the latter place offered itself after a detention of five or six days in Truxillo. I embraced it, of course, though the size and appearance of the vessel—a little schooner scarcely thirty feet long—might have deterred any one from venturing in her on a sea of such dangerous navigation as the Bay of Honduras.

The rumours I had heard of the distracted state of Central America were confirmed at Truxillo. An insurrection, I was told, had taken place among the Indians, who, under the directions of a man called Carrera, were ravaging the country, and committing all manner of excesses. Along the coast, and in some of the Departments, tranquillity had not been disturbed; but in the interior, there was no safety for the traveller, and every avenue to the capital was beset by parties of brigands, who showed no mercy to their victims, especially if they were foreigners.

This intelligence was discouraging, but there was no alternative: the journey must be performed. Accordingly,

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after taking leave of the Commandant and the captain, I went on board the little schooner, and we set sail for Balize.

The wind, at the commencement, was fair and moderate, but in the course of the night grew fresher and stronger, till it almost blew a gale. We had a boat astern, too large to be taken on board of our small vessel. As it was towed rapidly along, it soon filled with water, and we were obliged every two or three hours to heave to and bale it out. During one of these operations the schooner was suddenly struck by a gust of wind, and the main boom snapped in the middle. One of the broken ends was borne down the companion-way, but was fortunately prevented by the ladder from reaching the cabin, where I was lying. A moment after we shipped a sea. In the mean time the mainsail was flapping violently in the wind, and as the night was of pitchy darkness, some confusion ensued before matters could be arranged. The first thing done was to cut away the boat; the boom was then spliced by means of a couple of oars, and our little craft, being again put before the wind as our course required, was borne over the water even more swiftly than before.

In about forty-eight hours after leaving Truxillo, we were in soundings, and navigating in smooth water in an archipelago of keys, or islets, covered with verdure. We soon after came to anchor before the town of Balize, the situation of which is so low, that the houses seem rising out of the sea. The place had a neat and pretty appearance, and contrasted strongly with the old fashioned town I had just quitted on the other side of the bay.

We arrived on the afternoon of May the 4th. Towards evening I went on shore; and on my inquiring where lodgings could be procured, was directed to a sort of boarding-house, the only establishment in the place for the accommodation of strangers, and one of the meanest that can well be imagined. It may seem surprising that a populous English town should not be provided with a single hotel

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or house of reception for travellers, but the one just mentioned, but such is the fact.

On my coming to the house, I found two little negro girls sitting in the threshold, and inquired of them whether the master or mistress were at home. "Missus gone out," said one of them; "nobody in de house." "When will she come back?" said I. "Don't know, sar," was the answer. "But you will go and look for her," I rejoined, "and I will give you something." "Can't go," said the little baggage, in the same provokingly laconic style. I then tried her companion: "*You*," said I, "I am sure, will go and call your mistress." But she seemed animated by the same spirit as her fellow-imp. "Shan't do no such thing," cried she pertly. There was no other place to go to, and I had no idea either of returning to the vessel or of passing the night in the street. As the door of the house was not locked, I determined to go in, and wait till the mistress should return. On entering, I found the doors of the rooms open, and various articles lying about, without much regard to security. I took possession of a sofa, and had been resting there about an hour, when the mistress of the house made her appearance, and, on my making a short explanation, provided me with a room and bed.

The next morning I went to pay my respects to the Governor, or Superintendent, of the settlement. On my acquainting him with the object of my visit to that part of the world, and my intention of proceeding to Guatemala, he seemed surprised, and expressed his doubts of my being able to reach that city in safety in the then distracted state of the country. He assured me that the accounts I had received at Truxillo of the danger to travellers from the parties of factious Indians infesting the roads, were correct. He, therefore, conceived it prudent for me to wait until things should assume a more favorable aspect, or, at least, until he received further intelligence of the state of the interior. Uncertain what to do, I took my leave of him, and passed the rest of the day in rambling about the place.

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The houses of Balize are of wood, painted of some light gay colour, and are built in the style of those in England. They look very well; but their little rooms, and small sashed windows, without balconies, are by no means adapted to a sultry climate. They are enclosed, too, with fences and palisades, as if the occupants were apprehensive of intruders. In this, and in other respects, I was struck with the prevalence here of native habits and usages, however at variance with the climate and circumstances of the country. There are some good buildings in the place, but, I believe, all of wood; the principal are the Court House, the Government House, and the Episcopal Church. The population, of which a great portion are coloured people, amounts to six or seven thousand. The inhabitants are, for the most part, engaged in the cutting of mahogany, the exportation of which constitutes the chief business of the place. Several mercantile houses of respectability, however, import English goods, with which they supply the internal consumption to a great extent, receiving in exchange cochineal, hides, and indigo. An advantageous investment is thus afforded to British capital, as also by the commercial relations maintained between the place and Omoa, Truxillo and Izabal, where, besides the productions above mentioned, virgin silver and specie are received in exchange for British goods. Balize is, in fact, the key of Central America on the Atlantic side. It is almost the only channel of communication between Europe and this part of America, and its merchants are the agents of all commercial operations between foreigners and natives. The harbour affords a good anchorage, and is guarded by a little battery of ten or twelve guns, planted on a level with the sea, on a spot which may truly be called British ground; it having been raised from the water, and formed in a shallow part of the harbour, by the ballast brought in English vessels and discharged there by order of the Governor. There are, on an average, ten or twelve vessels always in port, mostly English. Two or

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three packets run regularly between the place and London. The situation of Balize could not be more unfavourable; it is in the midst of a swamp, partially converted into firm ground by means of drains and causeways. It is one of the most unhealthy places in the world. Fevers are very prevalent, and make great havoc among strangers. The water, too, in most families, supplied by the rains, is extremely bad, and tinged with a light yellow colour, by passing over the shingle roofs of the houses before being received into the cisterns.

Balize, now a place of some importance, was originally—as I have been informed—the resort of a famous buccaneer, or pirate, called Wallace, from whom it derives its name; the word Wallace being pronounced *Valiz* by the Spaniards, and, by an easy transition, converted by the English into its present denomination. On the expulsion of the pirate, the English were allowed by the Court of Spain, about the middle of the last century, to form a settlement there for the purpose of cutting mahogany and logwood. The extent of territory granted them was eighteen leagues, or fifty-four miles, along the coast. This grant was to be for forty years only, and the erection of any fortifications or permanent buildings, or the introduction of any garrison or military force whatever, were prohibited. These restrictions, however, were not much regarded. The place increased in wealth and population; and when the Spaniards, at the expiration of the stipulated period, attempted to dislodge the inhabitants, and take possession of the settlement, they found the undertaking superior to their strength, and were obliged to desist. Subsequently, when the colonies of South America declared themselves independent, the territory was claimed by the State of Guatemala, within whose limits it is situated; but the claim was of course disallowed, and the argument alleged was, that the territory had been granted to Great Britain by the King of Spain. This territory, instead of eighteen leagues, has attained to more

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than double that extent, and the possession of it by the English is regarded by the Government of Central America with a jealous eye.

The town of Balize is garrisoned by a regiment of blacks. The post of Governor, or Superintendent, of the settlement, is filled by an officer of military rank, combining the duties of the first civil magistrate with those of commander of the troops. The administration of justice is vested in seven magistrates annually elected.

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CHAPTER VI.

The Steamboat.—Don Francisco.—A Thunder-Storm.—A Vessel with three Captains.—Bay of St. Thomas.—A Modern Robinson Crusoe.—Passing of a Bar.—The Negro Alcalde.

On the third day after my arrival at Balize I was informed that a steamboat belonging to an English company was on the point of sailing from that port for Izabal. A vessel of this description in that remote part of the world was a novelty wholly unexpected by me. Unwilling to lose time by any detention not absolutely necessary, I determined to take my passage in her. From this, however, a Spanish merchant, Don Francisco * * *, with whom I had become acquainted in Balize, tried to dissuade me, by representing to me in the most serious manner the imprudence of trusting to those new fangled inventions of the English, and the probability of being blown up or scalded to death. The remonstrances of Don Francisco, who evidently was no friend to steamboats, or to any thing English, were lost on me, and I went on board.

After the lapse of three or four hours in hunting up the men, the crew of the vessel was at length collected, and the order was given to get under weigh. But here another difficulty occurred; the sailors, who were all intoxicated, refused to do any work, prohibited the engineer from getting up the steam, and threatened the captain. I began to think that I ought to have followed the advice of Don Francisco. In the mean time night came on, dark and gloomy, with a thick bank collecting in the horizon. About midnight a high wind rose, ac-

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companied by rain and occasional flashes of lightning. In a short time we were visited by one of those tremendous thunder-storms which are prevalent in the Tropics. The thunder, at first only heard faintly and at a distance, now rolled in awful peals over our heads; the rain fell like a cataract, and the glare of the lightning-flash was dazzling and incessant. I heartily wished myself on shore, and thought of Don Francisco. The small and rather crowded cabin was intolerable from the heat and smell of bilge-water, while the state of the weather rendered it impossible to remain on deck. About day-break, the storm had entirely ceased; the sky cleared away, and the sun shone out in all his brightness. The steam was then put on, and the vessel started. It appeared that our detention was a fortunate circumstance, for had the storm overtaken us at sea, the consequences might have been fatal.

We proceeded on our voyage without the occurrence of any incident worth noticing, except an occasional squabble between the captain and the men. It was evident that the former was very deficient in the knowledge of his profession, and still more so in energy and firmness of character. The sailors were not slow to discover this, and, in consequence, paid no deference to his authority. They used to say that they had three captains on board: the captain proper, the pilot, and the agent of the company, who had come with us. These three assumed the command occasionally; thus affording the men a pretext for not attending to the orders of either. We also had on board one of those troublesome subjects to be found in the crew of every vessel, a shrewd disputatious fellow, whom we used to call the lawyer sailor. This man used to set the others on, while, for his own part, he always kept on the right side of the law, and out of the reach of punishment.

The next morning early I was agreeably surprised by hearing the chirping of birds, and, looking out of the

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cabin windows, saw a grove of trees close under our stern. I went on deck, and found that we had arrived in the bay of St. Thomas, and had anchored within a few yards of the shore. A finer or more interesting view than that which presented itself on this occasion, I have seldom seen. The bay of St. Thomas lay before me like an immense basin, exhibiting a smooth and glassy surface, and a clear, sandy bottom, illuminated by the rays of the sun, which was then just rising over the mountains, and pouring a flood of light over hill and valley. The shores of the bay, making a wide circular sweep, extended to a circumference of some twenty miles. The land—which was clothed with a luxuriant verdure—rose higher in proportion to its distance from the water, till it terminated in a range of towering mountains, forming a magnificent amphitheatre. There was depth of water there for the largest ship ever built, and room enough for the whole navy of Great Britain to ride at anchor.

This splendid bay is situated on the right of the embouchure of the river Izabal, and at the head of the great bay of Honduras. Being protected against the winds by the surrounding land, it affords a safe harbour; and from its situation on that part of the coast most favourable for communicating with the interior, and its numerous other advantages, seems destined by Nature for a great commercial emporium. But thus far, the place is almost a perfect solitude. There was not a single vessel in the harbour but our own, nor a house to be seen on shore, except two or three miserable huts. These huts were the commencement of a settlement projected by the Government of Central America, but abandoned almost in the onset, from want either of means, or of energy, on the part of that Government in promoting objects of public utility. An establishment there had also been contemplated by a company of English merchants, who made proposals to that effect, with an offer of opening a communication across the mountains to the nearest point of

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the road leading from Izabal to the capital. But the same fatality that attends all efforts at improvement in this country, rendered this plan abortive, and it was in like manner abandoned.

Our object in coming hither was to take in fuel. While this was doing, I landed with two or three of the passengers, and proceeded to the huts just mentioned. We found there only a white man and two negro women; the latter inhabiting one of the huts, and the former lodged in a sort of barn, open to the four winds, except at one extremity, which was boarded off, and served as a bed-chamber. The man was a sort of commandant in the place. He had erected a flag-staff close by his dwelling, and wore a cockade as an indication of his authority. He received from the Government a salary of eight hundred dollars for remaining there, but was now, he said, pretty nearly tired of the solitude of the place and of the insignificance of his office, and was about to resign. All his furniture consisted of a truckle-bed, a few stools for chairs, and a rude table of rough boards. There was a hammock suspended from the beams of the roof, a rusty fowling-piece in one corner, and a fishing-net in another. He had some pigs and plenty of poultry, who had the range of the house, and seemed quite at home in it. He also had a kitchen garden, which I looked into and found well stocked with plantains, pumpkins, and other vegetables. In one of the largest huts, or rather in a large shed supported by upright shafts, there was a quantity of boards and shingles, which had been procured by the Government and sent thither for the erection of houses. But there was now no probability that this lumber would be used for the purpose for which it was intended, or for any other, as it was in such a state of decay as to be almost useless. We remained in this Robinson Crusoe establishment only a short while, the mosquitoes becoming so troublesome, that we were glad to return to the vessel.

The quantity of wood required having been now taken

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in, we started again, and shaped our course for the mouth of the river Izabal. About mid-day we arrived off the bar of this river, where troubles of a different description, but not less annoying than those we had encountered in the beginning, were awaiting us. The captain and pilot entered into a debate with each other in regard to the proper course to steer for passing the bar. In the mean time the boat was left to the management of the helmsman, and when it was least expected, she ran aground. The blame of this was thrown upon each other by the parties concerned, without any effort being made, for some time, to get her off. At length, the force of the steam proving inadequate to move the vessel either backwards or forwards, a kedge anchor was carried out, and after a world of labour on the part of the poor sailors, who now made amends for all their faults, she was hauled into deep water, and once more put in motion. But our satisfaction at the success of this manœuvre was not destined to be of long duration. A few moments after, the boat ran aground again, and stuck so hard and fast, that neither power of steam, nor warping with kedge anchor, availed to set her afloat. The pilot tried to console us by the assurance, that at four o'clock—it being then two—it would be high tide, and she would certainly get off. But four o'clock came, and the boat was still aground, as fast as ever. He then said that he had been mistaken as to the hour, and that at six o'clock it would be high tide. This assurance proved as fallacious as the first, for that hour, too, elapsed without any change in our position. We now came unanimously to the conclusion that our pilot was a perfect charlatan: an opinion which was subsequently confirmed, when we learned that in that part of the coast there was no tide at all. At the approach of night a breeze sprung up, and the water began to rise in waves. It was then resolved to hoist the square-sail, and to try by the combined power of wind and steam to drag the vessel over the bar. This was put in practice, and proved suc-

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cessful, for after awhile she began to yield to the powerful impulse thus given, and moved a little, then went ahead, and at length, though not without a good deal of thumping and dragging, passed the bar.

During the detention incurred by the grounding of the boat, I made another visit on shore, as well from curiosity as for the sake of procuring vegetables and fruit. On an elevated spot near the mouth of the river, and in a romantic situation, there is a little village consisting of forty or fifty huts, shaded by cocoa-nut trees. Thither I proceeded with two of the passengers, and found the place inhabited entirely by negroes, of the class called, as I have elsewhere observed, *Caribes*. We entered one of the best-looking huts, which we were told was the dwelling of the *Alcalde*, or civil magistrate, and found there an old negro lying sick in a hammock. He seemed glad to see us, and addressed to us a few words in a language almost unintelligible, being a mixture of French, Spanish, and English; but we made out that he had been for some time suffering from an affection of the lungs, and would take it as a great favour if we would recommend something for his relief. It is proper to remark here, that the country-people in Central America look upon every foreigner as a doctor, and place implicit faith in his prescriptions. One of us *did* prescribe to him, but whether to a good or a bad purpose, I cannot pretend to say. As I had no part in this, my conscience has never troubled me on the subject. The old man had a little image of *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* suspended from his neck. He was a great devotee of the virgin of this name, and counted largely upon her favour and protection. He also wore a little bag containing a relic of some saint, in which, too, he had great faith. The cabin he lived in—like all the others—was built of mud and cane reeds, and thatched with palm leaves, with only one door, and no windows. Though the largest in the village, it could not have exceeded fifteen feet square in extent. His furniture

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could not be more poor and homely; the only seat I was able to procure, being a barrel set on end. My companions accommodated themselves on an old chest. He insisted on our taking something to drink, and gave us some gin and water out of a calabash. He then, agreeably to our request, gave directions for the people to bring to him whatever fruit or vegetables they could spare; and in a short time, a much larger quantity than we wanted was supplied. This we procured for a mere trifle. We also obtained from the Alcalde a couple of fowls, for which he refused for some time taking any compensation. The two articles we most wished for—milk and wheat bread—could not be procured: the first they only had at certain seasons of the year; the other was a luxury utterly unknown there.

On our way back, we took a better view of the hamlet, and were pleased with its picturesque and primitive appearance. There was a fine spring of fresh water gushing out from the rocks in a shady place. The huts were scattered round without any order, each with one or two cocoa trees in front to protect it from the sun, and a patch of cultivated ground in the rear for raising vegetables. The inhabitants of either sex wore scarcely any clothing. We saw nobody at work, though it was not a holyday; yet they looked quite happy and free from care; and in this quiet and secluded state, apart from the rest of the world, they seemed to live forgetting and forgotten.

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CHAPTER VII.

The River of Izabal.—Mr. M.—An Exploring Excursion.—The Lake.—Don Valentin.—Remarks on Izabal.—Don José.—The Grave of an American.

It was late in the evening before our vessel gained the mouth of the Izabal. This river takes its rise in a great fresh water lake called *Golfo dulce*, and pursues a meandering course for some fifty miles, before falling into the sea. At the head of that lake is situated the town of Izabal, the port of our destination. The entrance to this river is scarcely discernible, even in the day-time, to an unpractised eye, till within about a hundred yards of it, when an opening is perceived in the mountains like the mouth of an immense cavern. The effect, as we approached it in the night, was still more striking; a starry sky affording just light enough to guide us on our path, but not sufficient to make objects distinctly visible. On entering the opening just mentioned, we seemed penetrating into the bowels of the earth. On each side of us towered the lofty and precipitous mountains that form the banks of the river; and immediately in front rose a high land, dark and frowning, as if to debar completely our further progress. Towards this land, which appeared to recede as we advanced, the boat kept her way, steadily and at a good rate, for a full half hour, with her bows apparently not more than half a cable's length distant from it. There were moments when I trembled lest she should run against it, and be dashed to pieces. But this interposition of land was only an illusion, caused by the windings of the river, and heightened by the confused appearance of objects in the night.

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About midnight the moon rose, and the effect of her pale silvery light on the trees and the water was beautiful beyond description. I could now see objects more distinctly, and felt satisfied that if there is anything picturesque, beautiful, and sublime in nature, it must be the entrance to this river. The banks rise to a height of from two to three hundred feet, and are clothed with a rich and impenetrable foliage, the branches of the trees spreading several yards over the water. In some places this foliage suddenly disappears, and a vast naked rock, smooth and flat, and perfectly perpendicular, rises like a stupendous wall, at the foot of which the depth of water admits of a vessel, brushing the very face of the precipice without danger. Here and there may be seen a rill of water, as clear as crystal, coursing from top to bottom of this natural wall, or gushing out from a fissure in its side. At other places, a group of rocks assumes the appearance of an old castle or ruinous fortification. The stream varies in width from a hundred and fifty to three hundred feet, and is in many places thirty fathoms deep. It is dotted at intervals with little islands covered with reeds; and the sharp turnings it makes, give continual interest and variety to the scenery.

As we proceeded, the noise of the water thrown up by the paddles startled the tenants of this beautiful wilderness; and every now and then we heard a plunge, like that of an alligator, or an otter, seeking the deepest recesses of the river, or the scream of an aquatic bird flying across the stream: the only sounds that disturbed the silence of this solitary scene.

In the course of the night the boat stopped at a little fort called San Felipe, to take in fuel. During this detention I allowed myself a little rest, but was up again the next morning by daylight, when I found that the boat was not yet ready to start. The scene around, illuminated by the first rays of the sun, appeared to me even more striking and beautiful than when I had beheld it by moonlight.

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The lofty and umbrageous trees exhibited every variety of green, from the deepest tint to the lightest, and were alive with singing birds, while parrots and mackaws kept up a continued scream. Now and then a monkey would show himself, for an instant, swinging by his tail from a twig, or leaping from branch to branch. The little fort, with its ruinous battlements, could be seen partly reflected in the water, the surface of which was skimmed by the alcatrazes intent on their prey, and seemingly unconscious of our presence.

The beauty of the opposite banks attracted my attention; and resolving to explore them, I got into a little skiff with Mr. M., an English gentleman and a fellow-passenger, and paddled towards them. In our progress along the shore, the first discovery we made was a cavern formed by a ledge of rock, projecting over the water, and sufficiently large to permit our little boat to enter it. Its sides were covered with moss and fern, but we saw no object of interest, except some fish, which our approach frightened away from the cool retreat they had selected. We then completely circumnavigated a little island. Further on we discovered a small cove, or recess, formed by an inequality in the bank, where the water was perfectly clear, with a clean sandy bottom, while the projecting branches formed a canopy of rich foliage, impenetrable to the sun. There were other places along the shore similar to that just described. These romantic spots seemed a fit abode for water-nymphs, or Naiads, and I almost wondered not to see any sporting in the water. When I contemplated these retreats, so cool, so shady and secluded, I remembered the poet of Mantua, when he exclaimed,

> "Oh, qui me gelidis in vallibus Hæmi
> Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbrâ!"

—and thought that here he would have found all that he sighed for, and that perhaps he would have preferred the shady banks of the Izabal to the cool vallies of Hæmus.

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At the fort of San Felipe, which is a ruinous and almost useless fortification, a soldier was put on board our vessel. This was done agreeably to the regulations of the Customs, in order to prevent smuggling. After leaving this place, and proceeding about twelve miles, we reached the point where the river spreads, and forms a lake of some twenty miles in circumference, called the *lagunilla*, or little lake, to distinguish it from the *laguna*, or great lake of Izabal. Here we saw a number of little islands of from five to ten acres in extent, covered with a species of cane or reed peculiar to the country, the resemblance of which to Indian corn gave to them the appearance of being cultivated. But, in reality, there were no signs of cultivation around us, nor could any human habitation be seen, either on the banks of the river or on the islands just mentioned. Birds and fish and reptiles seemed to be the sole lords of this wild domain.

After crossing the little lake, we came to the lake proper, where an immense sheet of water, extending to a circumference of not less than ninety miles, assumes the appearance of a little sea; the distant mountains being only dimly visible in some places, while, in others, a perfect horizon is formed.

We anchored before Izabal on the 10th of May. It was not without some misgivings as to the state of things on shore that we proceeded to land. We were by no means sure that the place was not in possession of the insurgent Indians, and the risk of falling into their hands the moment we touched the beach, was far from being agreeable; but happily, these apprehensions were soon dispelled. I had fortunately been provided by my Spanish friend in Balize, Don Francisco, with a letter of introduction to his correspondent in this place. This letter I presented as soon as I landed to Don Valentin * * *, the person to whom it was addressed. He received me with marks of unaffected hospitality; and, as dinner was in the process of

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being served up, made me take a seat at the table, where four or five strangers, besides Mr. M. and myself, partook of the abundant cheer that was spread before us.

Here, as in all parts of Central America, hotels or public houses are unknown. The traveller must therefore be provided with letters of introduction for every place he goes to. Yet these are not always indispensable; hospitality seems a matter of course; lodgings for a night are solicited without much diffidence, and in almost all cases are cheerfully accorded. Remuneration is neither asked nor expected. Even persons of limited means manifest an unwillingness to receive money in return for services of this kind. No objection, however, is made to compensation in the form of presents. A segar being, as some one has justly observed, the shortest road to the heart of a Spaniard, whether of the old or the new world, a few bunches of these will always prove acceptable to your host. A cheap pair of pistols, or a dagger, would of course be still more highly prized. A silk kerchief, of some showy pattern, will be esteemed by the housekeeper a handsome compliment; and if there are children in the family, a necklace of beads, or something equivalent, will make them supremely happy. It would seem that inns and taverns are the bane of hospitality, for this virtue certainly does not flourish in so great a degree where those establishments abound, as elsewhere, and so *mutatis mutandis*. Why none exist in the country, it is not in my power satisfactorily to explain. Perhaps as civilization progresses there, their utility will become apparent.

During dinner an animated conversation was kept up, which, however, did not in the least interfere with the eating; for most of the guests talked incessantly, without losing a mouthful. As soon as this repast was disposed of, I retired from the table, and seeing two or three hammocks hanging from the roof, took possession of one; and with an old newspaper in one hand, and a segar in the

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other, I smoked and read, and swung myself, with the cool breeze of the lake breathing on me, till I fairly fell asleep.*

Don Valentin is a sort of patroon, a little great man in the place, and is looked up to with respect even by the Commandant. His dwelling is a goodly house of wood, the frame of which was brought from the United States, but is constructed rather in the Spanish taste, the *sala*, or parlour, being almost the whole house. It is the resting-place of strangers of respectability, and the resort of the better class of the natives. He has, however, a powerful rival in another merchant, called Don Candido * * *, who is perhaps more wealthy, and is, in like manner, liberal in the entertainment of his friends. The houses occupied by these two persons are the only ones deserving the name; the others being little better than mud cabins, thatched with leaves.

In the course of a walk in the afternoon, I took a passing view of the town; but seeing nothing in it to interest me, I turned my steps to the mountain that commands it, and ascended to a spot where the roots of an old tree afforded a pleasant resting-place. Here a fine view is obtained of the lake and of the surrounding country. Before me were scattered the thatched roofs of Izabal, and on each side, as far as the eye could reach, might be seen a series of mountains, towering over each other, and piled up like Pelion upon Ossa. How deeply I regretted not being an adept at drawing, to have made a sketch of the scene before me! Yet it was not without defects. No vessels were to be seen on the lake, with the solitary exception of the steamboat; no signs of cultivation, not a

* I call this the sea breeze, though coming over the lake, because it blows inland from the coast. The sea breeze is one of the well known phenomena of low latitudes. It blows invariably from the East; and setting in about 9 A. M., continues till sunset. Its influence is felt in the interior at a later hour, and becomes less the greater the distance from the coast.

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hamlet nor a house were visible on the land, save the little town beneath me.

When I considered the natural advantages of this country, I could not but lament that so little had been done by human industry to improve them. The idea, however, suggested itself, that some day this lake, now little better than a watery desert, might be traversed in every direction by steamboats and sailing vessels engaged in profitable trade; when the country around, instead of being encumbered with a wild and useless vegetation, might smile with fields of corn, and the neat cottage of the peasant, the thriving hamlet, and even the flourishing town, enliven the quietude of these solitary shores.

At present, the only town, besides Izabal, along the whole circumference of the lake, is Verapaz; the only shipping is one steamboat and half a dozen sloops, and the only trade carried on is the importation of part of the foreign goods consumed in the interior, and the exportation of the productions of the country, which are exchanged for them. It is proper, however, to remark, in justice to the natives, that the natural advantages before alluded to are in some degree counteracted by circumstances over which they have no control. The unhealthiness of the climate in the neighbourhood of the lake, is a powerful check to the increase of population in Izabal. Another great obstacle to the prosperity of the place exists in the mountainous and rugged nature of the country, which renders the construction of roads exceedingly difficult and expensive. That leading to the capital is a mere mule path. It is, therefore, on mule-back that they transport their goods from the coast to the interior, or from the latter to the former. The expense and labour attending this mode of conveyance will easily be conceived. The time required for the performance of a journey, is another consideration; the distance travelled by a load-

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ed mule during a whole day, being scarcely that which a rail-car would advance in half an hour.

My first inquiries on arriving at Izabal were in reference to the political state of the country, and the chances of reaching the capital without being molested. On this subject I obtained but little information, except, indeed, that the insurrection had not reached that part of the country. The tranquillity of the neighbourhood had not been disturbed, but of the occurrences in the interior no late intelligence had been received.

After duly considering the circumstances of the case, Mr. M., the English gentleman with whom during our passage in the steamboat I had formed an intimacy, and myself, resolved to undertake the journey. A Spanish gentleman and merchant, Don José * * *, whom we met with at Don Valentin's, was induced to join the party. He had a quantity of goods with him sufficient to load a dozen mules, and was desirous, in the furtherance of his commercial pursuits, of proceeding to Guatemala.

The first step was to procure the necessary number of mules. This, after a couple of days, was accomplished; and all other preparations being now made, we were ready to commence our journey.

Previously to leaving Izabal, I felt it in some sort a duty to visit a spot calculated to inspire the most melancholy reflections. It was the grave of Mr. Shannon, formerly Chargé d'Affaires of the United States to Guatemala, and his niece. This gentleman had arrived at Izabal, with his wife and the young lady just mentioned, on his way to the capital. They had scarcely set foot on shore, when a sad instance occurred of the mortiferous nature of the climate here, not inferior, in this respect, to that of Balize. The niece, a young and blooming girl, full of health, was attacked by the fever peculiar to the country, and in

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forty-eight hours after was a lifeless corpse. The suddenness of this catastrophe produced such an effect on Mr. Shannon, as to disturb his mental faculties. He became delirious, was seized with the fever, and, in like manner, fell a victim two days after he was attacked. I will leave the reader to conceive the distress, the grief, the despair of Mrs. Shannon, when she found herself, in the short space of three or four days, bereaved of the two objects dearest to her in life. I will leave him to form an idea of her situation, alone in a foreign country, without any knowledge of the language, without a friend to console her, or even the means of performing in a proper manner the last duties that we owe to departed friends; the circumstances of the place precluding the possibility of a funeral solemnity.

The interment of these two unfortunate persons was attended to by Don Candido in the night-time, and by torch-light, with the assistance of a few of his friends. The bodies were deposited in a spot which he had set apart as a burial-place for his own family. The graves are only distinguishable by a slight elevation of the earth, and a few trees that have been planted there, but there is no stone or monumental record whatever to point them out to a stranger.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Preparations for Travelling.—Passage of "the Mountain."—An Encounter.—The "Arroyo del Muerto."—A Repast in the Woods.—The Rancheria.—Don José a Philosopher.

We rose early on the 12th of May, to enter upon the long and difficult journey that lay before us. My preparations, and those of Mr. M., were soon brought to a conclusion. Such was not the case with our Spanish friend and companion, Don José. The caparisons of his mule alone, consisted of such a variety of articles, that no little time and ingenuity were required for their arrangement. After putting into the animal's mouth three or four pounds of iron in the shape of a bit, a sheep's skin of fine long wool, dyed blue, was thrown over a ponderous Mexican saddle, and the whole fastened on by sundry girths and straps. This saddle was secured, in front, by a *poitrel*, or broad strap, rudely embroidered with silk of various colours, and behind by a crupper of the same description. The saddle-bow was graced with a pair of heavy horse-pistols, and on each side was suspended a goat's skin with the hair on, reaching from the shoulders of the mule to her knees. These skins were called *armas de agua*, and their object is to protect the legs of the rider from the rain.

The equipment of Don José himself was a riding-dress of serge, a broad-brimmed Panama hat, a pair of heavy plated spurs, and a sort of gaiters called *rodilleras*, consisting of two pieces of fine calf-skin wrapped round the lower part of the legs, and secured under the knees by a piece of coloured tape.

In fine, Don José looked so well and so grand, that

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Mr. M. and myself almost felt ashamed of the plainness of our appearance. Even my mule seemed uneasy at the simplicity of her furniture; and, in fact, as she had nothing on but a common, though new, English saddle and bridle, there was something strange and ludicrous about her that did not fail to excite the risibility of the natives.

The baggage mules, and those that carried the goods of Don José, being now laden and ready, we took leave of Don Valentin, and departed on our journey, preceded by our guide, a tall, swarthy fellow, well mounted, with dagger in belt, no shoes or stockings, and an awful pair of spurs on his naked heels. Our road lay across the mountain which overlooks the town, and over a rough and rocky ground, the difficulties of which are increased by the abruptness of the acclivity. Before commencing the ascent, we had to follow for some time the channel of a mountain torrent, where, though there was not much water at the time, there was such an abundance of loose stones, that the mules scarcely knew where to set their feet. We then proceeded up the side of the mountain by a narrow winding path, which the trunks of fallen trees rendered almost impassable in some places, while, in others, it was so steep, that our beasts were in danger of rolling down the mountain: an accident which was very near happening, for one of the mules actually lost her footing, and fell back with her load to the ground and her feet in the air. Fortunately she was saved from further harm by an intervening tree, and prevented from carrying the hinder animals along with her in her fall. Sometimes the path would diverge into various ramifications, when the voice and the lash of the muleteer were exerted to prevent the convoy from going astray. Now and then, on coming to a rocky place, it would assume the appearance of broken stairs. The agility of the mules in clambering up these rugged places was remarkable, while the care with which they picked

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out their way, avoiding the holes and loose stones, and never moving a foot till they had secured a firm stepping for it, was a proof of their patience and sagacity that struck me with surprise.

On these occasions, the rider, if he is wise, will be careful not to meddle with his mule, but will tie the reins of her neck and abandon himself to her discretion. For my part, I had enough to do, in another way, without attending to the mule, since I was kept a great part of the time drawing up my legs to avoid the projecting rocks, and bobbing my head to save it from the branches.

The density of the trees was also a great obstruction to our progress; the mules, with all their sagacity, running against them with their loads, and sometimes getting jammed between two trees, so as to be prevented from moving either backwards or forwards. Then might be heard the angry muleteer rating his beast for carelessness; and the words, "*Ah mula! ah lerda! libra, libra!*" (oh mule! oh stupid! stop, stop!) would echo through the woods. The word *libra* is also used when a mule is required to make room for another to pass ahead.

As we continued up the mountain, the features of this sylvan wilderness became more and more picturesque and grand. Groups of rocks of various and fantastic forms hung over our heads, as if ready to fall and crush us, or rose up in our path, obliging us to make a tedious circuit. Now a deep ravine must be crossed, and now a precipice must be passed within a few feet of its edge. Gigantic trees reared their heads in the vallies below, and on the heights above, while others, of smaller size, grouped together at intervals, looked like little groves planted by the hand of man. Nature was here exhibited in her most wild and majestic form. The lofty pine was there, and the mahogany, and knotty ceyba, and the palm tree, the pride of the Tropics. Of the latter there were many varieties, some rising to a height of fifty feet,

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with a strait smooth trunk not bigger than a man's arm. Of birds there was a vast number, especially parrots. The Cropendôla, and the Sinsonte, a species of nightingale, were remarkable for the softness and clearness of their note. The American raven, called Sopilote, hovered around us, or, perched on some rocky peak, eyed wistfully our panting beasts as they toiled up the mountain-side, in the hope that some of them might fall from exhaustion, and, by expiring, afford him and the rest of the flock a luxurious feast.* The great number of these birds is a proof of the frequent occurrence of these accidents. Indeed, we, in several places, saw whitening in the sun the bones of some poor mule which had dropped down dead in the passage over this mountain.

We were about four hours in reaching the summit. On arriving there, I turned for a moment to view the country we had left behind. We seemed to be walking on the tops of trees, a labyrinth of woods, and rocks and mountains, lay beneath us, and I was astonished at what we had accomplished.

We were on the point of commencing the descent on

* This species of raven, called Sopilote, is held in much esteem by the Spanish Americans, from its usefulness. It lives on carrion, and performs the part of a public scavenger. Without this bird, the vast quantities of animal matter exposed in the woods and fields, after death, would infect the air, and produce distempers. It is asserted that in each flock there is one bird enjoying a superiority over the rest, and called by the natives the Alcalde. He obtains the first morsel at every feast; the other ravens never presuming to taste their food till the Alcalde has commenced. The Sopilotes never make any living animal their prey, and scrupulously abstain from touching any thing while there is a spark of life in it. I have seen a party of them standing round a dying horse—like so many doctors round a sick man's bed—and anxiously awaiting the moment when the animal should breathe his last. There is another species of raven, which follows in the track of the Sopilote. It is called the Quiebra-huesos, or Bone-cracker, from its feeding upon the bones which are left by the other bird. These it prefers to the flesh; and the facility with which it breaks and eats them, is remarkable. Thus these two birds, by co-operating with each other, not only soon dispose of a dead animal, but cause all vestige of it to disappear.

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the other side of the mountain, when we heard the cries of muleteers and the tramp of mules at a little distance before us. A few minutes after, we fell in with a caravan coming in the direction we were going; and before any thing could be done to prevent it, both parties were mixed up together. Now, let the reader picture to himself the mules jostling and getting foul of each other, falling down, or running out of the path into the woods, the drivers lashing and cursing them, and trying in vain to set them right, and he will have an idea of the trouble and confusion that ensued. After a while, however, order being restored, we resumed our march, and commenced descending. The country that lay before us was of a character analogous to that we had passed, only with less declivity, and presented a succession of woody heights and deep glens as far as the eye could reach. The ground, in hollow places, was moist and slippery, though it had not rained for some time before. Some of the passes, too, which were steep and rocky, were not without their difficulties and dangers. I had every reason to be satisfied with the beast which had been procured for me, for, I think, she never even stumbled once; and this is the more remarkable, since having dismounted in some places that appeared to me dangerous, I fell down twice in spite of all my care.

The sun had passed the meridian, when we came to a romantic spot, where a copious stream, foaming and brawling over its rocky channel, pursued a winding course towards the vallies. This stream was called *El arroyo del muerto.* A shady recess on the banks, where Nature had spread a carpet of the finest green sward, was pointed out by our guide, and here the caravan came to a halt; for our beasts and ourselves were much fatigued, and in want of some refreshment. Our mules, without waiting to be relieved of their burdens, rushed into the stream, and took a long and copious draught. We, too, were glad to indulge in the liquid element, and drank of

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it in all its purity. A *manta*, or blanket, was now spread upon the grass, and our stock of provisions was produced. This department had been particularly attended to by Don José. A good-sized ham, two cold fowls, some hard-boiled eggs, and a little jar of olives, were the component materials of this rustic repast, which, I am sure, every one thought a feast. There were also a few bottles of tolerable Catalonia wine; and our English comrade, Mr. M., treated us to a taste of good Cognac from a flask which he wore suspended from his shoulder. We took our seats upon the ground, each armed with his dagger, or some formidable weapon very much like one, but without forks or spoons, and, I think, only two glasses for the whole of us. The mirth and gayety of the party, the pleasantness of the spot, and the wildness and beauty of the natural scenery around us, gave a zest to this repast that made it one of the most delightful I ever partook of. The group we formed, as we sat, or lay, on the grass, with our mules grazing round us, the variety and singularity of the dresses, and the display of weapons of various kinds, gave us very much the appearance of a party of *facciosos*, or brigands, or a band of the *gens non sancta* of the insurgent Carrera.

Our meal was soon ended, and the fragments of the feast were quickly disposed of by the *arrieros*, or muleteer. The loads and baggage were now replaced on the mules; we mounted again, forded the stream, and continued our journey. Our path lay, as before, through a mountainous and woody country, and we pursued our way over rocky heights and down verdant glens, now clambering up a steep acclivity, now descending by an abrupt slope into a valley, crossing ravines, and threading defiles, till about five o'clock in the afternoon. By this time we had reached an open space in the mountains, in the middle of which was a group of huts, with good pasture around, and plenty of water. This spot was called the *Rancheria de los Pozos*. A rancheria is any place where a traveller may

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procure food for his cattle, and a roof to protect him from the dews of the night or the heat of the sun. We had now accomplished the most arduous part of our task, and surmounted the great difficulty attending a journey into the interior: we had fairly passed the great mountain behind Izabal, called *Montaña del Mico*, and generally, as it were, *par excellence*, denominated simply the mountain. We had achieved in one short day's journey, what sometimes requires two or three days. Indeed, there are times, especially in the rainy season, when the passage of this mountain is utterly impracticable, owing to the deep mire and pools of water that obstruct the road; and cases have occurred of muleteers having been compelled to abandon their loads in the woods for several days, till the weather afforded an opportunity to return for them. In our case the weather had been excellent; and as it had not rained for some time previously, the road, almost every where, was perfectly dry.

The few cottages or huts composing the Rancheria, were built of mud and cane, and thatched with leaves. One of the best was cleared out for the accommodation of Don José, Mr. M. and myself. A sort of shanty, or roof supported by posts, served as a place of deposit for the merchandize and the baggage. The mules were turned out into the plain to take care of themselves, which, from the abundance of pasturage, they could easily do. These arrangements being made, the next consideration was to procure something for supper, since our only meal, thus far, had been the one at the *arroyo del muerto*. This object, however, proved to be one of difficult attainment. There was nothing in the place but *frijoles*, or black beans, and a few *tortillas*, or corn cakes. The provisions we had been supplied with at Izabal, had been consumed to the last fragment. This was the first taste I had of the troubles and privations to which a traveller is subject in this wild and half-civilized quarter of the world. Don José put the best face he could upon the matter. A genu-

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ine Spaniard, under every reverse, consoles himself by a *no hay remedio*, or a *no importa*, and illustrates his case by some appropriate proverb. "No hay remedio," (There is no help,) said he, "á buena hambre no hay pan duro," (with a good appetite all bread is soft.) Thereupon, he gave directions for cooking the beans, which were first boiled and then fried with lard, and seasoned with salt and pepper. The tortillas were warmed, and we sat down to this humble and frugal meal with a good will; for, with the exercise we had taken, and the pure air of the mountain, our appetites had returned. The brandy flask of our English friend, which had survived the rude attacks made upon it in the morning, now fairly gave up the ghost: a catastrophe which, under the circumstances, we could not but lament.

We then disposed ourselves for sleep. The arrieros stretched themselves out on the bales and boxes under the shanty, or on the bare ground in the open air. Don José and Mr. M. slung their hammocks, and were soon comfortably settled. But this was a mode of resting I had not yet learnt, and which can only be rendered agreeable by custom. I unrolled the leopard's skin given me in Truxillo, and spread it on the ground. With my cloak over this, to serve as a mattress, and with my saddle for a pillow, I flattered myself that my bed would not be inferior to those of my fellow-travellers. I may have been mistaken, for it certainly was not a very soft one. Nevertheless, I soon fell into a profound sleep, which I enjoyed without interruption till the calls of the arriero, and the light of the sun beaming bright through the chinks and crannies of the hut, gave warning that it was time for us to depart. No time was lost in getting ready, for the sun was already high in the horizon. The baggage and other mules were laden; we mounted again, and proceeded on our journey.

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CHAPTER IX.

Fording of a River.—The "Hacienda."—A Natural Park.—Apprehensions on the Road.—Gualan.—A Christening.—The Curate of Tocoy.—The Fiesta.—St. Isidro.—Rural Theatricals.

Our route led us still through a mountainous tract, but less wild and woody, and diversified by the frequent occurrence of little plantations of maize. It was a series of hills sloping into picturesque vallies, where some limpid rivulet might be seen gleaming through the reeds and bushes that fringed its banks. As we proceeded, we descended into an extensive plain, called the valley of Gualan; and here, some further signs of human industry were visible in the culture of the soil. An occasional glimpse was now obtained of the river Gualan, which traverses the plain along a channel worn deep by the rapidity of the current. On approaching the banks, which, except at the fording-place, are abrupt and precipitous, some doubts were entertained as to the practicability of the ford, for there was no bridge; but our guide, pushing his mule into the stream, led the way, and was followed by the whole party. This, however, from the plunging and splashing of the mules, as they waded through, breast high, was not accomplished without some difficulty, nor without a little wetting.

From the opposite bank onwards, for a few miles, the road gradually ascended, till it terminated in an eminence, affording a wide and delightful view of the plain and river we had left behind. It was a fair and lovely land, smiling with verdant meads and shady groves, where a virgin soil, as yet scarcely disturbed by the labours of the hus-

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bandman, seemed to hold out to agricultural industry a rich reward.

A little further on, we came to another rancheria, and halted for the sake of a little rest and refreshment. Some eggs and coffee afforded a tolerable breakfast.

About five in the afternoon we came to an *hacienda*, or estate, called Iguana, where we resolved to put up for the night. The owner of this property was absent; but the steward, who was on the spot, admitted us at once, and throwing open the house for our use, left us to take care of ourselves. The house was large and commodious, and built of cedar. It was partially furnished; so that we not only had chairs and tables, but beds and hammocks. Even plates and glasses, and other table furniture, were supplied by the steward, when he became satisfied in regard to the character of his guests. The mules were led into a spacious stable, and abundantly supplied with green corn-stalks. A couple of fowls fell victims to the necessities of my companions and myself; a mess of black beans and tortillas was prepared for the coarser appetites of the arrieros.

After dinner, or supper—for it was either, and even both—I took a view of the premises. They consisted of several out-houses, serving for stables, granaries, and lodgings for servants, all situated close to the dwelling-house, and protected, on the side facing the road, by a rude wall of stone, without cement, and a wide gate. There was also an enclosed space, called a *potrero*, for the confining of cattle. The grounds were partly woodland, and partly cultivated with corn and beans, but the greater portion served for pasturage.

On retiring to rest, I was furnished with a field-bed, or cot, and a mattress, and thought it luxury. Don José, for his own individual use, drew forth from one of his trunks a pair of sheets; but this, Mr. M. and I pretended to condemn as an act of effeminacy, and rallied Don José on the bad example he was setting. He confessed that the occa-

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sion was not one for indulging in *gollerias*, (delicacies,) and pleaded, as an excuse, his being rather advanced in years.

During the last two days we had come eighteen leagues, or fifty-four miles, a distance which is more than is usually travelled in that region of rugged and mountainous roads in the same space of time. Our object the next day was to breakfast at Gualan, a town about three leagues distant, where Don José had some friends, who, he had reason to believe, would receive him with particular attention.

We left the hacienda early the next morning, after remunerating the services of the steward with a small sum, which he seemed to take with reluctance. The country we now passed through consisted of open plains, covered with long grass, and of woody tracts, where again I was surprised by the variety and beauty of the trees—some of them in blossom, others bearing wild fruits—and by the number of birds of brilliant plumage. The most remarkable of the trees was one called the *chilindron*, which bears a fruit like a walnut, though ten times as large. This fruit is covered with a hard green rind, and its peculiarity is, that it does not hang from the twigs of the tree, like other fruits, but grows out of the trunk and larger branches, and so close to the bark, that it looks as if placed there artificially. I was not able to ascertain the uses of this fruit, which is not eatable, being bitter and unpalatable. Neither in regard to the names of the birds, was I able to elicit much information from my fellow-travellers, whose ignorance or indifference about these matters was surprising. One species of bird, however, they told me was the American jay, the back of which is blue, and the breast white; the neck is encircled by a dark ring, and the head surmounted by three little feathers, not unlike those in the head of a peacock.

In the course of this morning's travel we came to a plantation of nopal, or cactus, the leaves of which are

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about half an inch thick, full of prickles, and very juicy. It is on the leaves of this tree that the insect from which cochineal is made feeds and propagates. The country now was more generally cultivated, and, in many places, enclosed by wooden fences or by hedges of the agave mexicana, or *pita*. The river Gualan had to be forded a second time, but with less trouble than before. After passing the river, we entered upon a beautiful tract of land, which had all the appearance of park scenery in England. It was an extensive plain, clothed with a fine short grass, with here and there a group of tall trees, forming a delightful grove, perfectly free from underwood. It seemed as if we were riding over the grounds of some prince or nobleman: the appearance of a few deer, or of some stately mansion gleaming through the trees, would have made the illusion complete.

As we approached the town, we passed through various rancherias, the inhabitants of which, mostly Indians, were employed in the manufacture of *petates*, or mats, of a straw peculiar to the country, which they stain of various colours: an art in which they display no little ingenuity and taste.

We were within half a mile of Gualan, when we heard the report of a gun from the town, and a moment after, several more shots were fired in succession. The effect upon the whole party was paralysing; it brought us all suddenly to a halt. Were the factious Indians in possession of the town? Would it be safe to advance? Would it not be more prudent to retreat? Such were the hasty reflections of the moment. Happily, our apprehensions were removed by a woman who was coming from the town, and found us in the midst of consultation. "What is the meaning of the firing we hear in the town?" was the question addressed to her. "*Es una fiesta*," (it is a festival,) said she, and proceeded on her way. There was no reason for distrusting this woman, for she was not an Indian, and we resumed our march. As we entered the

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town, guns were popping off in every direction. I turned to a lad near me, as he was on the point of cocking his gun, and asked him what festival they were celebrating. "*Es un bautismo,*" (it is a christening,) said he, and the reply was followed by the discharge of his gun, which blazed within half a yard of my face.

Our companion, Don José, now conducted us to one of the best looking houses in the place. It was the dwelling of a friend of his, Don Juan * * *, who received us with great kindness and attention. This gentleman united in his own person the two professions of farmer and merchant. His house was full of people. A party of musicians was playing there, under the directions of a *maestro de capilla.* On a table at one end of the room, was an inviting display of cakes, sweetmeats, and bottles of red wine. On another table lay scattered the remains of an abundant breakfast; but the partakers had not yet left the table. I recollected the wedding of Camacho, and thought the inimitable description of that scene by Cervantes was here on the point of being realized.

Don Juan informed us that he had that day christened his first-born, and had invited a few friends to celebrate the event. He had also furnished the boys of the town with powder and crackers, according to the custom of the country. We now took seats at the table, and such of the dishes as had not been touched were set before us; the other guests retained their seats to keep us company. All this time the music was playing in a strain more remarkable for loudness than harmony; the boys were blazing away in the street, and the newly made Christian was squalling at the top of its voice; so that altogether a din was produced which, but for the sound state of our nerves, would have been insufferable.

The breakfast being disposed of, and a reasonable time having elapsed in talking and smoking, Don José made a move towards taking leave and continuing our journey. This was met by the decided disapprobation, not only of

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Don Juan, but of all his guests. His wife, Doña Chonita, an amiable brunette, declared we should not leave Gualan till the following morning. To do otherwise would be a want of consideration towards herself. It would also be a want of taste; since we should lose the opportunity of seeing a play that was to be performed that night in honour of Saint Isidro, whose festival occurred on the following day; and we should, moreover, be deprived of the pleasure of seeing Saint Isidro himself, arrayed in his best, upon an altar glittering with lights, and blooming with flowers.*

Don José was unable or unwilling to combat the arguments of our pretty hostess, and cast a look at Mr. M. and myself, as if to consult our wishes. It was evident he was desirous of remaining. Mr. M. anticipated my concurrence, by declaring at once that he was in no hurry to depart; and as his vote gave to Don José the majority, mine was not required, and it was definitively settled that we should stay and enjoy the *fiesta*.

In the interval between breakfast and dinner, I went, in the company of one of the guests, an ecclesiastic, to take a view of the town. It has a thriving appearance, and contains a population of some three thousand souls. The houses are built of solid materials, but consist of only one story, according to the general custom of the country. The principal street is of a good width, and straight, and

* The festival of St. Isidro is also one of the favorite celebrations of the inhabitants of Madrid. It occurs on the 15th of May, when vast numbers of people, both from the country and the city, repair to a chapel dedicated to the Saint, and situated on an eminence about two miles to the West of Madrid. On this eminence,—which is a charming spot, affording a fine view of the Capitol and of the Manzanares,—and round the chapel, a number of booths and stalls are erected for the sale of sweetmeats, refreshments, and toys, as also stages for the performance of jugglers and mountebanks. Dancing, singing, music, and feasting, constitute the business of the day. St. Isidro is surnamed *el labrador* (the husbandman,) from the profession he pursued, and is the patron of agriculturists.

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passes through the *plaza*, or square, in the centre of the town. This plaza is decorated by a fountain, and contains the church, as also the *ayuntamiento*, or town-hall. The town is situated near the banks of the river Gualan, and is the largest on the route to the capital. Much of the business between the coast and the interior passes through the hands of agents residing in this place.

My companion, the ecclesiastic, was the curate of a neighbouring town called Tocoy, and had been compelled by the political troubles of the times to abandon his flock, and take refuge in Gualan. The town where he resided had been entered five times by the insurgents under Carrera, and each time his house had been plundered, under the pretext that he was a friend and partisan of the Government. The poor curate, thus reduced to utter poverty, had found no sympathy among his parishioners, and, in a fit of disgust, had left them and the place, with the fixed resolution of never returning.

He seemed, however, by no means dejected by his reverses, and in the afternoon was the first to propose our setting out for the place where the fiesta in honor of Saint Isidro was to be celebrated.

About two miles out of town there was a small estate, the residence of an old Spanish officer, who had closed his military career by coming to Central America and turning farmer. He it was who had prepared the fête in question; he had caused the image of the Saint to be transferred from the church to his house, and had even composed some verses on the occasion. Don Juan and his friends having been invited, a party was formed of three ladies and nine gentlemen, including my two travelling companions and myself. We went on horseback, and took with us the *maestro de capilla* and his band. Doña Chonita rode in an English saddle on a spirited horse, which she managed with considerable skill. Her dress was not a riding habit, but a short silk gown, a hat with a profusion of black feathers, and a sort of scarf,

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called *rebozo*, thrown over one shoulder, and wound round the waist. The other ladies were equipped in a similar manner. The gentlemen were all mounted on good horses, or mules, gaily caparisoned, and wore light summer jackets of silk or cotton, and straw hats. Each carried a dagger, stuck in a sash of some gay coloured silk, and some had holsters and pistols. The curate rode a splendid mule, almost the only part of his property that had been left him by the insurgents. The beauty of this animal attracted my notice, and I remarked to one of the party nearest me, that I had never seen a curate, either in old Spain or in that country, whose mule was not an excellent one. This remark, which was founded on experience, was seized upon by the rest of the party, who rallied the curate on the attention which those of his cloth invariably pay to their individual comforts and conveniences.

We proceeded at a good rate, and I had reason to admire the graceful and fearless manner with which the ladies managed their horses. Doña Chonita, who had a spice of mischief in her character, seeing me mounted on a pony, which I had taken in preference to my mule, with my feet only a few inches from the ground, indulged in a few witticisms at my expense; and not satisfied with that, seemed resolved to put my skill in horsemanship to the proof. Bidding me keep by her side, she said, "*vamos corriendo*" (let us run); and off she started, with her horse at the top of his speed. I followed, and away we went, up hill and down dale, over rough and smooth, to the imminent risk of our necks. For my part, I expected every moment that my pony would stumble, and that I should roll with him to the ground, and be run over by those who came galloping behind. Happily, nothing of the kind occurred, and we arrived in safety at the *hacienda*, or estate.

The first object that met our view on entering the house, was the image of Saint Isidro. It was placed on

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a temporary altar, ornamented with bouquets of wild flowers, and wax tapers burning in plated candlesticks. The ladies, on coming into the presence of the Saint, left off talking, and tried to look devout. The gentlemen took their hats off. Very soon, however, both sexes began to whisper, then to talk loud, and then to laugh. At length, all respect for the Saint seemed to have been lost; for the gentlemen put their hats on, and some of them actually took out their segars and smoked in his face.

We were now conducted to take some refreshment at a table amply furnished with cakes, sweetmeats, orchate, lemonade, cinnamon water, and a beverage called *fresco*, an infusion of the pine-apple. The house, though little better than a large hut, had a neat and holyday appearance; the walls were set off with festoons of shrubs and flowers, and the floor was strewed with leaves. A sort of barn, immediately opposite the house, had been cleared out to serve as a theatre. It was entirely open on the side that was to face the audience; the roof and sides were ornamented with branches of trees and little flags of different colours; a few boards clumsily put together answered the purpose of a stage, and a large piece of canvass that of a curtain. There was also a temporary shed of branches of the palm tree, supported by stakes, to serve, in case of need, as a shelter for the *turba multa* of the uninvited. All this, and the crowd of people flocking in from the town and the adjacent villages, reminded me of the fête described in Gil Blas, and got up in Olmedo by Thomas de la Fuente, with this difference, that there were no Latin inscriptions.

Some time was consumed in arranging matters, before the play could commence. In the mean while, the audience had crowded together in front of the stage promiscuously, and in a manner not approved of by the *Patron*, (the master of the fête,) or by the curate. The latter took upon himself to remedy this confusion. He directed the maestro and his musicians, who composed the orches-

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tra, to take position at the foot of the stage. Then separating the women from the men, he placed the former immediately behind the orchestra, making them squat on the ground, and bidding them to keep silent. This he called the pit. Behind the women, and all round, were distributed the boys and such of the men as were of low statue. The tall fellows were directed to stand behind the short ones and the boys, or to shift for themselves as well as they could. This was the gallery. A space in front of the stage was set apart by the curate *para los señores*, (for the ladies and gentlemen.) A couple of benches were placed here, one behind the other, and this he called the front boxes. The docility and good humour with which the people submitted to the dispositions of the curate, and the respect they showed him, impressed me with a most favourable opinion of their character and feelings. The spectators sat in the open air, under the light of an old wooden chandelier bristling with tallow candles. They now began to be impatient for the play, or for something to amuse them, and the cries of *musica! musica!* though responded to by the orchestra, were soon followed by those of *la comedia! la comedia!* At length an actor steps before the curtain, and recites a prologue, the subject of which is the life and merits of St. Isidro *labrador*. The *patron* solicits our particular attention to this part of the performance, which he tells us is his own composition. We of course listen with admiration, and, on the conclusion of the prologue, dismiss the actor with a burst of applause. Now the curtain rises, and the play begins.

The title of this performance was *El enamorado pobre*, or the Poor Lover. The plot turns upon the rivalship of two gentlemen, who aspire to the hand of a fair lady: the one exceedingly amiable, accomplished, and handsome, but very poor; the other, destitute of every advantage, except that he is very rich. The embarrassment of the lady, before deciding in favour of either, and the arts

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resorted to by the lovers respectively in furtherance of their pretensions, constitute the play, which, as it is also enlivened by the witticisms of a *gracioso*, is not without some interest and merit. Of course the preference is given to the poor lover, much to the satisfaction of the audience, who applaud the lady for her good taste.

It was amusing to observe how much regard was paid by the people to the character represented, and how little to the manner of performance. The poor lover, as an actor, was decidedly inferior to the rich one; yet he was the favourite of the public, who were lavish in their praise of him, while the other, whenever he came on the stage, was received with murmurs, and ran the risk of being hissed.

It would be unfair to criticise the acting. They did their best; especially the prompter, who, if the actors committed any blunders, was certainly not to blame, for he read their parts to them loud enough for all of us to hear. He had a hard time of it, too, poor fellow, now pushing in one actor, now pulling out another, and occasionally, in a fit of impatience, thwacking his manuscript over their heads.

The play was followed by a *saynete*, or afterpiece; and when the curtain dropped, the people were so well pleased, that they gave a shout of applause, and cried out, *Brava comedia! Viva el patron!*

The only person who did not enjoy the fiesta was my English friend. The play, he said, was a bore, St. Isidro a humbug, and the people all fools. Soon after the commencement of the play, he retired into the house, and passed part of the time in taking a nap.

It was near midnight before we returned to Gualan. On arriving there, I was shown into a neat room, where I found a good bed, with the whitest linen, and with a mosquito net of the finest gauze; so that this time I had no reason to be envious of Don José.

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CHAPTER X.

Departure from Gualan.—St. Pablo.—The Centenarian.—"Tortillas."—Goitres.—Town of Sacapa.—A Dilemma.—Change of Route.—Valley and Town of Chiquimula.—Cabildos.—The Cautious Ladino.—Mountain of Saltepeque.—The Devout Guide.

FROM the information we were able to collect in Gualan with respect to the movements of Carrera and his party, it did not appear that there was any actual danger in continuing our journey to Guatemala. The curate of Tocoy, however, who yet smarted under the injuries inflicted on him by the insurgents, warned us to be on our guard, lest we should fall into their hands, and related so many instances of their rapacity and cruelty, that he almost shook the resolution we had taken of proceeding.

It was not without a feeling of regret that we parted from Don Juan and his family, by whom we had been so hospitably and agreeably entertained. We were dismissed by them, and by the Padre, or curate, with the best wishes for our welfare; the latter observing that he probably would see us in Sacapa, a place on our route ten leagues distant, whither he proposed going as soon as he should be satisfied of the safety of the road, and beyond which, he believed, we could not pass.

That morning we followed for a few leagues the course of the Gualan, the banks of which, in some places, rise to a height of a hundred feet above the level of the river. We then proceeded without any incident through a country similar to that already described. The only object that attracted my notice was a tree, of which several specimens occurred, called *arbol de la cruz*, having a leaf

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precisely in the shape of a cross, and a large white flower called *flor de la cruz*, (flower of the cross.) Our mules being in good spirits, from the rest they had enjoyed the day before, we reached the village of St. Pablo about mid-day, having travelled a distance of six leagues. The inhabitants were chiefly Indians, living in little huts, and almost in a state of nature; the men, and even many of the women, being, from the waist upwards, totally uncovered. We stopped at the house of the alcalde, a creole, who inhabited a hut, very little better than the others, with his family and his aged father. This old man (the father) I was assured had reached the venerable age of a hundred and two years. He was a native of Spain, and had served his sovereign as a soldier for the space of fifty years. His senses were only partially impaired; for though his sight was dim, his hearing was good, and in conversation he was perfectly coherent. He had never obtained any pension from the Spanish Government; "and now," said the old man, "as I am not able to work, my son has taken upon himself to support me. *Dios se lo pague* (God reward him!)"

The daughter of the alcalde, a robust girl bordering on twenty, was occupied in making *tortillas*, or corn cakes. These cakes are an excellent substitute for bread in a country where the cultivation of wheat is very limited. As the preparation of them is one of the most important concerns of a country household in Central America, it may not be uninteresting to describe the process. The corn is first moistened in water slightly impregnated with lime, which removes the husk. It is then placed on a stone of oblong shape, the surface of which is rather rough, and curving inwards. It is now ground into a paste by means of a stone roller, larger in the middle than at the ends, and held by the extremities. This paste is ground two or three times, and then formed by the hand into very thin cakes, which are placed on a heated plate of iron, where, in a few seconds, they are sufficiently

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baked. This is an invention purely Indian, and has been adopted by the Spaniards in America. The same process is used for making chocolate; it has been in practice since the discovery of the country; and it seems singular, that after so great a lapse of time, no improvement has yet been made in it.

The village of St. Pablo had nothing in it remarkable. The inhabitants seemed very poor, and almost destitute of the necessaries of life. They were also much afflicted by *goitres*, a disease very prevalent in Central America. Some cases of this disease I had noticed in other places in the course of our journey, but now they were becoming more frequent. I have been assured that there are parts of the country where this disease is so common, that one person out of five is afflicted with it. The causes in which it originates I was never able fully to ascertain, though one of them is said to be the quality of the water.

As we had brought a supply of provisions from Gualan, our repast in this village was easily prepared. After a halt of a couple of hours, and sleeping a short *siesta*, we took our leave of the alcalde, whose services, on account of his filial piety, were remunerated rather more liberally than they otherwise would have been. A ride of five hours more over a dry and barren country, brought us to the plains of Sacapa, where Nature reappears in a garb of richest verdure.

The town of Sacapa is situated on an eminence, near the banks of a respectable stream which traverses the plain. It is rather larger and more populous than Gualan, and lies ten leagues distant from that place, on the road to Guatemala. Here, too, we found the people amusing themselves, and uniting the pursuit of pleasure with the duties of religion. They were celebrating the cross of May, and had erected in the middle of the plaza a high cross, which was decked with every variety of wild flowers that the country and season produced. In front of

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the cross, and under a shed formed of green palm leaves, stood a little altar with an image, and lights burning before it. Two musicians, one with a drum, and the other with a sort of flageolet, called *dulzaina*, were playing; and a crowd of women, sitting round the cross, prayed and sang alternately.

Having been furnished by Don Juan with an introduction to a friend of his in Sacapa, Don Mariano * * *, we alighted at the house of this gentleman, and met with a favourable reception. The house of Don Mariano, one of the best in the place, though only one story high, was built round an area, or court-yard, in which a few trees were planted that afforded an agreeable shade. On three of the sides of the house, facing the area, there were various rooms for different purposes, the doors of which opened into a *corridor*, or piazza. The part of the house next to the street, consisted of a good *sala*, or parlour, a room for dining, and a store for the sale of goods.

Soon after our arrival at Sacapa, we became satisfied by the statements of Don Mariano, that to proceed any further on that road would be the worst of follies. He assured us that, from that town to Guatemala the country was infested by the factious Indians, who hovered about the roads in small parties, plundering and murdering, and showing no mercy to their victims, especially if they were foreigners. To travel ten leagues beyond Sacapa without falling in with one of these parties, he considered a matter of impossibility. The alcalde of the place, who was consulted, expressed the same opinion. With the advantage of a military escort, the attempt, he said, might be successful; but as none could be procured in that place, he advised our remaining for the present where we were.

The result of these deliberations was the suspending of our journey. After a detention of two days, a new consultation was held, in order to decide upon the next step to be taken. We were unwilling to remain much longer in Sacapa; to proceed to Guatemala was impracticable;

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and to retrace our steps was out of the question. In this dilemma an alternative was proposed by Don José, which was that we should proceed to Esquipulas, a town situated on the road to St. Salvador, and about sixty miles to the left of the Guatemala road. From that town the communications with the capital might possibly be open. And should that not be the case, we could remain there under the hospitable roof of the curate, who was a near relative of his, and would be glad to entertain us.

As there was no reason for apprehending any danger on the road to Esquipulas, which was one lying out of the track of the insurgents, the plan of Don José was approved of and adopted. Just as we had come to this conclusion, we were agreeably surprised by the appearance of the curate of Tocoy, who had that moment arrived in town. On my making him acquainted with our intention, he shook his head, and accompanied his disapprobation of the plan with the most melancholy forebodings. "I wish you would not go," said he, addressing Mr. M. and me; "I should be so sorry if anything happened to you;" and turning to Don José, he added, "you make yourself responsible for any evil that may befall these gentlemen." We thanked the Padre for the interest he took in our behalf, but our minds were made up, and the next morning we took leave of him and of Don Mariano. "The blessed Virgin be with you," said the curate on our departure; which was responded to by me with the usual wish that he might live a thousand years.

After proceeding a few miles, the green plains of Sacapa entirely disappeared, and we came to an arid, hilly country, where every thing looked parched by the sun. The heat, too, which was great, was the more oppressive from the stillness of the air, and the absence of any trees to shade us. Further on, we came to a steep mountain, where masses of rock, like lava, gave evidence of the existence, at some remote period, of a volcano. The ground was very much broken, and covered with loose stones,

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and the soil produced only a meagre and stunted vegetation. With considerable labour, and after two hours' travel, we arrived at the summit of this mountain, when we had a view of a plain called the valley of Chiquimula, and of a range of mountains beyond, extending far away, till they faded on the sight. This, from my experience thus far, I found to be the general character of the country in Central America, which is a succession of mountainous ridges crowned with wood, and of vallies, more or less extensive, but generally well watered, and extremely fertile.

We reached the town of Chiquimula early in the afternoon, and concluded to stop there for the rest of the day. This we found to be a place of some importance, and the head of a Department. Its population may be from four to five thousand; the streets and houses have a good appearance, and the church—which, as every where else in that country, is situated in the plaza—is a large handsome building, but spoiled in its interior by a number of vulgar images. The plaza—one of the characteristic features of Spanish towns—contains, moreover, a fine fountain, shaded by several palm trees.

As we had not proposed passing the night in this place, we had come without any letter of introduction, and, in consequence, had to apply to the alcalde for quarters in the *Cabildo*, or town-hall. This is generally the resource of travellers in Central America on arriving at a town where they have no acquaintance; for, as I have heretofore observed, public houses are unknown in that country.* The alcalde very kindly offered us his own house, or he would billet us on any of the inhabitants. But we declined both these offers, and proceeded with

* Cabildo, in the common acceptation of the word, applies to a town-hall, but in the present case means a resting-place for travellers. It is, in fact, a sort of caravansary, and in this light it may be regarded as a vestige of the oriental practices still prevalent in Spain, and introduced by the natives of that country into their American possessions.

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him to the Cabildo, where a large gloomy chamber, with one table and three or four rickety chairs, was placed at our disposal.

The aspect of things here was certainly not very inviting, and thereupon Don José began to moralize, and to console himself and us with the hope of better luck in future. There was another cause for melancholy reflections in an object of a truly ominous character which I have not yet mentioned, and which met our sight the moment we entered the chamber. This was nothing less than a coffin, fortunately an empty one, for of this I satisfied myself by lifting up the lid. This coffin, a large one, covered with black cloth and silver lace, was public property, and had been used during the prevalence of the cholera in that town, not for burying the dead, but for carrying them to the grave. It was of course immediately removed into another part of the building by direction of the alcalde, who, at the same time, ordered some mattresses to be brought for our use. Our other wants were supplied by the curate of the place, who sent us a tolerable supper, and rendered our situation altogether comfortable. The arrieros found no difficulty in procuring accommodations for themselves and the mules.

The following morning early, we mounted again, and resumed our march. Our route now was through a delightful valley in high cultivation. The land was irrigated from a river by means of water-courses, as is practised in some of the southern provinces of Spain. At a little village called St. Helena, we halted to take some refreshment. Soon after leaving this place, we came to a rocky ridge, and, on passing it, descended into another valley, and arrived at Saltepeque: an Indian village prettily situated, well provided with water, and surrounded by a rich vegetation. Between Chiquimula and this place we saw various plantations of nopal, sugar-cane, and corn. Some of these plantations had fruit trees grow-

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ing in them, and were protected by neat enclosures, which gave them the appearance of gardens.

At Saltepeque we halted for the night. The occupant of one of the best-looking huts, who was not an Indian, but a *ladino*, the name given there to light mulattoes, afforded us lodgings with a good grace, and undertook to cater for us. I was surprised to see him, on going out for this purpose, gird on an old basket-hilted sword. To a remark that I made upon this, he replied that it was growing dark, and that a little precaution could not be amiss. It gave me, however, a very bad opinion of the inhabitants of the place. On our retiring to rest, my two fellow-travellers had recourse to their hammocks, and I, as on a former occasion, to my leopard skin and cloak.

The next day, just as a faint gleam of light in the East announced the approach of dawn, we were roused by the guide we had engaged at Sacapa. He exhorted us to be stirring, and to lose no time, for we had an arduous task before us; the mountain of Saltepeque had to be passed—a lofty, steep, and rugged mountain, scarcely less formidable than that of Izabal—and it would be well, he said, to accomplish this before the sun was very high in the horizon. Our preparations were soon made, and before the sun had risen we were again upon the road.

We soon came to the foot of the mountain alluded to by the guide, and its appearance corresponded but too well with the description he had made of it. The ascent was abrupt and rocky, and the path, leading sometimes across a ravine, and at others along the dry channel of a torrent, presented at each step some new difficulty to be surmounted. Some parts of the mountain were woody, and here the underwood and long grass were another obstruction to our progress.

In about three hours we reached the summit, when I perceived a sensible difference in the temperature of the air, which was here much cooler than in the plain below. The descent on the other side was through a forest of lofty

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pines. After proceeding a little further, an opening in the trees afforded a distinct view of the plains of Esquipulas, and of the shrine or temple of that name, so celebrated in all the country. The guide, who was riding at the head of our party, on descrying the temple, made a sudden stop, and pointing towards it, cried, "*el Señor de Esquipulas!*" He then took off his hat, crossed himself devoutly, and muttered a short prayer, after which he spurred his mule, and was again in motion.

In the course of our descent I was struck with the beauty and grandeur of the scenery which presented itself to the view. Passing along the summit of an elevated ridge, we sometimes looked down upon a vast hollow on either side, many hundred feet deep, where the density of the trees and bushes had the appearance of a sea of verdure. As we approached the base of the mountain, the country became more clear, and the ground was clothed with a shorter and finer grass, and decked with a variety of beautiful wild flowers. At length we reached the plain, and proceeded along a tolerably level road towards the town of Esquipulas, where we arrived about the hour of noon.

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CHAPTER XI.

Town of Esquipulas.—A New Perplexity and Change of Route.—The Curate.—His Domestic Establishment.—His Library.—Attending Mass.—The Shrine of Esquipulas.—The Miracle.

Our reception by the curate, the friend and relative of Don José, was the most cordial and flattering. His house, which was situated opposite the church, and provided in front with a good portico, and in the rear with a spacious yard, was one of considerable size, but not very convenient; having only two rooms, besides the *sala*, or parlour. One of these rooms was assigned to Don José and Mr. M.; the other the good curate insisted on my occupying, though it was his own bed-chamber and study. For his own accommodation, a little cot, or field-bed, was brought into the sala.

The furniture of the house was more remarkable for its classic simplicity, than for its elegance or convenience. In the principal room, the only articles composing it were a wooden bench, with a back and rests for the arms at each end, placed against the wall, and before it a massive mahogany table. This part of the household arrangement had very much the appearance of a tribunal; and when the curate sat there—which he invariably did when any one came to talk to him on business—he looked like a magistrate dispensing justice. Along the walls were distributed about a dozen chairs of no mean dimensions, and of most antiquated fashion; the seats and backs being lined with sole leather, and studded with nails, the heads of which were of polished brass, and as large as half dollars. On the side over the mahogany table there was a portrait of our Saviour, and opposite to this another portrait, representing a *nuestra Señora*.

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During dinner the conversation naturally turned on the political disturbance of the country, and the state of the roads between Esquipulas and the capital. The intelligence afforded by the curate on this subject could not be more discouraging; and all hope of continuing our journey from that place was utterly relinquished. My disappointment on finding that I had come so far out of my way to no purpose, may easily be imagined. Mr. M. was seized with a fit of spleen, and talked of retracing his steps to Balize; Don José formally announced his intention of proceeding no further; so that the probability now was, that I should be left alone. Don José, however, ever fertile in expedients, suggested one, which, under the circumstances, I was fain to embrace. "You have gone," said he, "considerably out of your way; to go a little further, will only be a small addition of trouble;" and this remark he accompanied by one of his old Spanish proverbs, which corresponds to the English saying of "in for a penny, in for a pound." "The road to St. Salvador is a continuation of that by which we have arrived at this place; pursue that road, and proceed to the city of St. Salvador, which at present is the seat of Government, and where means will not be wanting for your performing, with safety, the journey to Guatemala."

In respect of the risk I might incur by adopting this advice, the curate assured me that whatever danger there might be of falling in with ordinary robbers, there was none to be apprehended from the insurgents, who, it was known, were in another part of the country. My next inquiry was in relation to the length of the journey to St. Salvador, when I learned what Don José called a little further, was upwards of a hundred miles. Having now decided on proceeding to that city, I had one point more to settle, that of persuading Mr. M. to accompany me. In this I succeeded, after a little coaxing and entreating, and just as I was helping him to the last glass of a bottle of the curate's claret which we were drinking between us.

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Our departure, however, was not to take place till after the expiration of two or three days. The following day, our worthy host said, was Sunday, and we must go to mass; and then some time would be required to see the place, and, above all, the shrine of Esquipulas, as also to procure mules and arrieros for taking us to St. Salvador; those we had brought from Sacapa having now fulfilled their engagement.

Such were the incidents of the day of my arrival at Esquipulas. At night I was shown into my bed-chamber, where every thing appeared to be in the same state as when occupied by the curate. In a spirit of curiosity I proceeded to examine, and note down, the various objects round me. A very pretty little crucifix of silver, suspended from the wall over the bed, was the first object that attracted my attention. Near that was a *bênitier* with holy water, and in another place a reliquary of St. Gabriel. On a table, I found a manuscript, which proved to be a Register of births, marriages, and deaths, and in a book-case that was open, the following, among other works: the Bible in latin, a breviary, Thomas à Kempis, *Institution des Curês* in French, and Taboada's Dictionary of the Spanish and French languages.

The next morning, when the tolling of the church-bell announced the hour of divine service, we were invited by the curate to attend the ceremony of mass, which he was about to perform. We went, accordingly, notwithstanding a disposition manifested by Mr. M. to decline the invitation. The church was a large, gloomy building, combining the modern with the gothic style of architecture, and consisted of one aisle, with pilasters on the sides. The altar was surmounted by a large crucifix of wood; the floor was paved with flat bricks or tiles. The congregation was composed chiefly of women, who sat or knelt on little mats in the middle of the church. They wore mantillas over their heads, a kind of shawl, of fine white flannel or baize trimmed with white satin ribbon. Some

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wore the usual scarf, called *rebozo*. They were otherwise neatly dressed, but none of them had shoes or stockings. The men stood round, except a few of the better class, who were accommodated with benches, of which there was one on each side of the church. The ceremony was soon brought to a conclusion, when we returned to the house to breakfast. After this, it was proposed to pay a visit to the temple of Esquipulas, about a mile distant from the town; and mules being procured for the purpose, we started for that celebrated shrine with the curate, who, as is usual with his brethren, was admirably mounted.

The temple, or church, in question, stands by itself in the midst of a plain. It is a noble pile, and contrasts singularly with the insignificance of the town in the vicinity of which it is situated. It has a lofty and spacious dome, and at each angle a tower of considerable elevation. The architecture is sufficiently regular and chaste. As a work of art, this edifice is calculated to produce a greater impression on the beholder, from its situation in a spot where, for some hundred miles round, there is nothing of the kind bearing even a remote comparison with it. To a traveller coming in view of it on a sudden, it might look like the work of enchantment. It had to me the appearance of an Escurial in miniature. Entering the church through a lofty portal, rich with ornaments of sculpture, we took a view of the interior, which is divided into three aisles, the central one formed by two rows of heavy pillars, with their corresponding arches. On each side are various chapels, images and pictures, and the walls in many parts are covered with *ex votos*, in the shape of hands, arms, and feet, made of wax, and offered there by devotees who have attributed to this shrine the cure of diseases they have been afflicted with. Over the principal entrance in the choir, and at the other extremity of the building, is the principal altar, in front of which, in a shrine richly carved and gilt, is an image of Christ crucified, to whom the church is

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consecrated. The image is about four feet high, of wood, beautifully bronzed. The ornaments about the shrine, and the image, are of gold and silver, some of them set with precious stones.

Many and wonderful are the miracles attributed to this image, the fame of which has spread far and wide in that country. Hence the number of pilgrims that come annually to offer at its feet their vows and prayers; amounting in some years to five thousand. In some cases, when the devotees have been prevented from attending personally, they have addressed their prayers in letters directed to the *Señor*, or Lord of Esquipulas. The zeal and devotion of the pilgrims is evinced by their approaching the temple on their knees, or by carrying from a considerable distance a heavy cross, or a large stone. Their reward is a bit of ribbon which has touched the image, and has stamped on it the words, *Dulce nombre de Jesus.*

This temple was built in 1751 by Don Pedro Figueroa, archbishop of Guatemala, who appropriated almost the whole of his means to this object. Its revenue is from four to five thousand dollars, and is derived from legacies, donations by the pilgrims, and other sources. Divine service is performed there occasionally, and once a year a grand festival is celebrated.

The curate, an amiable and sensible man, and somewhat of a scholar, was nevertheless a firm believer in the miracles attributed to the image just described. He seemed anxious to impress me with the same belief, and tried every argument that he thought calculated to remove my incredulity. At length he pressed me so hard, that I was fain to resort to a stratagem in order to escape from the toils he was spreading round me. I declared to him that if the *Señor* de Esquipulas would work a miracle in my behalf between that day and the next, and enable me to proceed to Guatemala direct and without risk, I would believe in him. The reader will be surprised to learn what follows. On getting up the next morning, and as I

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was leaving my chamber, the first person I met was the curate. He had been lying in wait for me; there was an arch smile on his countenance; he saluted me with the usual *buenos dias*, and expressed himself with the following words, "Did you not ask for a miracle? and did you not require that it should be a safe and direct conveyance to Guatemala? Well, sir, your conditions have been fulfilled. I have just learned the arrival in this town of a convoy of mules laden with tobacco, which, as soon as a party of soldiers appointed by the Government to escort them shall arrive, will proceed to the capital direct. Could you desire a better opportunity? will you now believe?"

I confess that the statement of the curate struck me with surprise. I affected to believe that he was jesting, but he soon compelled me to admit the truth of his assertion. On inquiring, however, into the particulars of the case, I learned that eight days at least would elapse before the arrival of the escort; that the rate of travelling of the convoy would never exceed eight or nine miles a day; that they encamped in the open fields; and that to get to Guatemala in this way, would be the business of a month. This being the case, I told the curate that it would not do, and that the miracle was no miracle after all.

The town of Esquipulas—in itself little better than a village—is remarkable, not only for the church described above, but for a fair that is held there once a year. The principal street consists of two rows of little shops, or booths, which are hired out during the fair to the merchants, or dealers, that repair thither with their goods. The concourse of people at that time is so great, that the town is inadequate to their accommodation, and they are obliged to encamp in the open fields. The number, I was assured, is seldom less than twenty thousand. With all these advantages, the town of Esquipulas, singular as it may seem, instead of exhibiting any signs of prosperity, has all the appearance of a poor and insignificant village.

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CHAPTER XII.

Departure for St. Salvador.—The "Mal Paso."—Town of Ocotepeque.—Scruples of a Quondam Monk.—An Hacienda.—Throwing of the *Lazo*.—An Awkward Mistake.—The Liberal Housekeeper.

On the 23d of May—three days after my arrival at Esquipulas—I took my departure for St. Salvador, with Mr. M., two arrieros and four mules. I was furnished by the curate with a letter to an inhabitant of the village of Ocotepeque, nine leagues distant, where it was our intention to pass the first night of this journey, and where a fresh set of mules would have to be engaged for taking us to St. Salvador. Don José had given me two letters for persons residing in the latter place, and had, moreover, added to my baggage a basket, of the contents of which I was left ignorant, but which, he said, would be found useful on the road. To this gentleman, whose wit and amiable disposition had thus far enlivened our route, and whose services I foresaw we should miss, and to his hospitable relative the curate, I said, on parting, every thing that friendship and gratitude suggested.

We proceeded on our journey through a pleasant country, consisting of extensive meadows, with tracts of woodland at intervals, where we saw large herds of cattle grazing, till we came to the Empa, a considerable river, which we forded with difficulty. Further on, we came to a place called the *mal paso*. This was a deep ravine, overhung with rocks and bushes, in passing which it was necessary to proceed through a natural lane, or gulley, formed by the rocks, which on each side presented a wall some ten feet high. On the opposite side, the ravine, as well as the gulley, were commanded by an eminence

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crowned with trees; so that, altogether, a more favourable spot for a military ambuscade, or for the purposes of highwaymen, could scarcely be desired. In fact, the place was noted for the crimes committed there, on which account, more than from the difficulties of the place, it was styled "the dangerous pass." Our feelings, on approaching this spot, were by no means pleasant, from the possibility of meeting there with some disagreeable adventure. Mr. M. and I had only one pair of pistols between us, (for I had lost mine a few days before,) and the muleteers were armed only with their knives. Our apprehensions were increased by a story related by one of these men, of a French gentleman who had been murdered there by robbers. He showed us the very spot where he fell, and graced his tale with a variety of circumstantial horrors. It was our fortune to pass the *mal paso* without any accident. But the impression left on our minds by the circumstances of the place, and by the story of the muleteer, disposed us to look with distrust on any one we might meet with on the road. Thus, on overtaking two men on the other side of the ravine, the arrieros at once declared them to be *mala gente*, (bad people;) and in reality, they did look like suspicious characters, though they were apparently unarmed.

Proceeding a few miles more, we came to a hamlet, with nothing remarkable about it but its name, which was *el dulce nombre de Jesus* (the sweet name of Jesus.) At another place, called St. Antonio, we halted to take some refreshments. Here Don José's basket was inspected; and most agreeably surprised were we by its contents, which proved to be an abundant supply of substantial viands, with the delicate accessories of a few loaves of wheat bread, some chocolate and wine.

Early in the evening of the same day, we arrived at Ocotepeque, having performed a journey of nine leagues, or twenty-seven miles. On inquiring for the person to whom our letter was addressed, we found that he was

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absent, and his house shut up; so that now we were left to shift for ourselves, for we knew no one in the place, and there was no Don José to counsel or direct us. Mr. M., however, by a happy inspiration, pointed to a house that he had taken a fancy to, and insisted on applying there for quarters. I saw no reason for preferring that house to any other, but I complied with his wishes, and entered the house, saying, "*Ave Maria purissima!*" when a middle aged man appeared, who in a very civil manner desired me to command him. On my asking the favour of being permitted with a friend of mine to pass the night there, he made me a sign to wait, and retiring into the house, re-appeared the next moment with a woman, who, as she scanned Mr. M. and me with a glance of her dark and penetrating eyes, seemed to wait for an explanation. My request being now addressed to her, she replied, "*como no?*" (why not?) which, with the natives, is the usual and favourite mode of answering in the affirmative.

The man and woman just mentioned were brother and sister; and from the assiduity and good will with which they attended to our wants, we had every reason to congratulate ourselves on having selected their house for our abode. We were also fortunate in another respect, since on inquiring for mules to take us to St. Salvador, the brother, who was the owner of several, offered to furnish them himself, and to be our guide and attendant on the road. An engagement was, accordingly, made with him, with a promise, on his part, that we should set out the following morning at an early hour. But this promise our host, Juan Rodriguez, (such was his name,) had no intention of fulfilling; for on my asking him, before retiring to rest, at what hour of the morning he would call me, he hesitated, and seemed a little puzzled. I proposed the hour of five, but this he thought too early. I then said six, and then seven, but still he seemed inclined to make it a little later. At length I brought him to an explanation. The next day, he said, was a holyday; it

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was the festival of the Ascension; and he could not think of going upon a journey on such a day without previously hearing mass. And as this ceremony would not take place till nine o'clock, he hoped I would defer our departure till that hour. I argued and reasoned with him, and tried to remove his scruples by adverting to the old Spanish saying, that duty is before devotion. But he retorted with another, equally good, which was:

"Por oir misa y dar cebàda,
Nunca se perdiò jornada."

And thereupon I yielded the point, and agreed not to set out till he had performed his devotions. He then told me that he had been a friar of the order of St. Francis, and that, though religious orders were now extinct in the country, it was his practice, on particular festivals, to go to church in his monkish habits, which he carefully retained, and hoped some day to resume. I no longer wondered at the scruples he had exhibited. The next morning, it was amusing to see Juan Rodriguez figuring, at first, in the garb of a friar, and then, on doffing his habits, transformed into something like a captain of banditti, with his *chamarra*, or mantle, over one shoulder, a dagger in his belt, and a rusty Toledo hanging from his side.

It was near ten o'clock before we started from Ocotepeque. It was therefore deemed expedient not to stop till we finished the day's journey, and we travelled, without intermission, till five in the afternoon, when we came to a village called *el Sacario*. The distance of this place from Ocotepeque is eight leagues, or twenty-four miles, nearly a regular day's work; so that the saying of the ex-friar, that in travelling the time employed in saying your prayers, or in feeding your cattle, was never time lost, was verified to the letter. As he had some acquaintance with the place and its inhabitants, and as our stock of provisions was not yet consumed, we found no difficulty either in procuring a resting-place for the night, or

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a good meal, so desirable after an uninterrupted ride of seven hours.

Leaving el Sacario, we travelled through a broken, rugged country, intersected by so many brooks and torrents, that we crossed about twenty of them in the course of the morning. Here and there, delightfully romantic spots occurred, where a refreshing shade, and a rill of cool translucent water murmuring over a bed of rock, seemed to invite the wayfarer to rest, and breathe awhile, after the fatigue of travelling in a burning sun. Our route, however, was not enlivened by the appearance of a single village, or even a house, till about noon, when we came to a considerable *hacienda*, or estate, called *Amayo*.

This is one of the finest estates in the country, and is the property of Don Joaquin San Martin, late Vice-Chief, or Governor, of the State of Guatemala. Don Joaquin happened to be on the estate, and to our application for permission to rest under his roof for an hour or two, he replied in the most civil manner, that "his house was at our disposal." Nor was this an empty compliment, for he, at the same time, ordered dinner to be prepared for Mr. M. and me, and that care should be taken of the arrieros and the mules. This repast, which was served up on a long table, with a bench on each side, we took in a spacious hall, where, besides some furniture of a rude and primitive fashion, there were instruments of agriculture of various kinds, and saddles, bridles, swords, fowling-pieces, and hammocks.

The house was a large substantial building, with the usual court in the centre, surrounded by a corridor. In the rear of the house was a large yard, or enclosure, in which two or three hundred horses were undergoing the operation of being marked. The greater part were colts, as wild as if in a state of nature, and as nimble as deer. They were galloping and racing around the yard at a furious rate, and several men were employed in catching them, one after the other, which they effected by means

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of the *lazo*, or noose, throwing it over the neck or legs of the animal, and then pulling him to the ground, when the heated iron was applied to his quivering haunch. I afterwards had an opportunity of seeing the lazo used in the open fields, where the horse had fair play, and often led his pursuer a long chase before he was taken. A half-naked young Indian, with spurs on his bare feet, and the lazo in his hand was mounted on a swift horse, and having singled out his beast, rode into the midst of the drove to catch him. The skill he displayed in this operation, and his bold and graceful manner as a rider, while careering about the field, afforded a sight of no little interest and excitement.

The estates in this part of the country are chiefly devoted to the raising of cattle and breeding of horses, for which every facility is afforded by the vast extent of the pasture lands. In fact, we could see whole herds grazing in the plains around; and as Don Joaquin pointed to them, he expressed his fears lest some of Carrera's people, when in want of horses, should pay him a visit, and supply themselves at his expense. So cheap are horses there, that for twelve or fifteen dollars I might have selected one out of a hundred. The price of oxen is in the same proportion. That of horses seems to depend upon their training, for as soon as they have learned to pace and amble, they are estimated at five or six times the original value.

Having taken leave of Don Joaquin, we proceeded on our way through vast fertile plains, which still afforded good pasture, though it had not rained for some time; this being the dry season. We passed through numerous herds of cattle and horses, and at one place ran the risk of being attacked by a couple of bulls, who were disputing the mastery of the field in a fierce fight just on the borders of the road. Their horns were interlocked, and they were struggling and bellowing tremendously; but on our approaching them, they suspended their con-

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test, and fixed their eyes upon us, as if disposed to resent any interruption. We, however, hastened to avoid them by a circuitous movement. A little further on, near the edge of an extensive copse, we saw two deer. On descrying us, they pricked up their ears, and for a moment gazed without moving. Then stamping with their fore-feet two or three times, they bounded away, and disappeared in the copse.

At an early hour in the evening, having arrived at an estate called *Sapote*, we resolved on passing the night there. Here, by some unaccountable mistake, I took the owner of the property, who was residing on it, for the steward, and, in consequence, was not quite so ceremonious in my manner towards him as he had a right to expect. Not satisfied with his admitting us into the house to pass the night, I desired him to order a couple of fowls to be killed for our use—intending to pay for them—which was accordingly done. In the mean time, Mr. M., in his conversation with this gentleman, had learned the truth, and hastened to apprise me of my mistake. I was confused and mortified beyond expression; to offer any apologies would only aggravate the matter; so I tried to make amends by an extreme of modesty and respectfulness in my deportment.

This estate was not quite so large or valuable as that of Don Joaquin, but there were some large plantations on it of maize and nopal, besides live-stock in abundance.

Soon after resuming our march on the following morning, we crossed the Empa a second time. The ford was rather deep, but was passed without accident. We continued to meet with numerous herds of cattle and horses, and here and there a cultivated field, but no villages, or houses, except one or two miserable *rancherias*. Coming in the course of the morning to another estate, called *la Toma*, we were induced to stop there, in order to get some chocolate prepared for our breakfast: a supply of this article having been furnished us by Don José. On

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entering the yard before the house, we found some of the dependents of the estate breaking in a colt, and inquired of them for the master of the house. They told us in a careless manner that neither he nor the steward were at home, and seemed altogether little disposed to show us any attention. I had turned my mule, and was on the point of retiring, when perceiving a woman at the door of the hall, looking at us attentively, I rode up to her, and asked whether she would not permit some chocolate to be prepared for our use in the kitchen of the house. The answer could not be more civil, "*Como no? pasen adelante,*" (why not? walk in,) said she; and on our dismounting, showed us into the best room, and desired us to be seated. This woman proved to be the housekeeper. On our chocolate being produced, she made us put it back, saying that there was enough of that in the house, and that she would order some to be made immediately. A table was now covered with a perfectly white cloth; and a few moments after, two bowls of chocolate made with milk were placed on it, smoking and foaming, and, moreover, a delicious cream-cheese, just made, a plate with some pieces of honeycomb, some tortillas and cakes.

In a spirit of generosity, inspired by the sight of these delicacies, we abandoned to the arrieros the remains of Don José's basket, chocolate and all. And for my part, I resolved, after this, in cases of trouble, to appeal always to a woman rather than to any of my own sex.

After partaking of this excellent and unexpected breakfast, the necessity of making some return for the liberality of the housekeeper naturally suggested itself. But how to accomplish this, we were unable to determine. The offer of a pecuniary compensation would perhaps be considered an offence; and neither Mr. M. or I were in possession of any article that might prove an acceptable present to a female. It was, therefore, decided to offer nothing but our thanks; and these I undertook to express in the best and most flattering manner that I was able. This decision, I

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have reason to believe, was the right one. After an interchange of compliments with this good-natured woman, and a mutual expression of good will, we took our leave, and resumed our journey.

In the afternoon of that day we arrived at a village called *Apopa*, four leagues distant from St. Salvador. As it was now too late to continue our journey, in the hope of reaching that city before night, we resolved on remaining in the village. We had to content ourselves here, as in other places, with such accommodations as the place afforded. But I had now become so indifferent to comforts, that I could sleep on a mat on the ground, and dine upon black beans and tortillas, as well as the most hardy of the natives: such is the effect of habit, and so easily does the human frame accommodate itself to circumstances.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Approach to St. Salvador.—Indians and their Dress.—Arrival at the City.—The "Meson."—The Hospitable Frenchman.—The American Consul.—Description of St. Salvador.—The Market-Place.—The Vice-President.—The Secretary of State.—A Visit to the Chamber of Deputies.—A Ball.—The American Janissary.—Departure.

It was a delightful morning when we left the village of Apopa for St. Salvador. A serene and cloudless sky of deepest blue was illuminated by the first rays of a refulgent sun, that rose majestically over the distant mountains; the long shadows of the trees were gradually becoming less; and the fresh dew on the grass and on the branches sparkled with the brilliancy of diamonds. The balmy softness of the atmosphere, the warbling of the birds, and the freshness of the breeze that gently breathed on us, inspired the most pleasurable emotions, and we felt happy in the mere consciousness of existence.

In our progress towards the city, we admired the beauty of the country, and the number and extent of the plantations. Several pretty farms, or country residences, with gardens and orchards, attracted my attention. The number of people was also remarkable, as we had been accustomed of late to travel many leagues at a time without meeting a human being. But it was Sunday, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, in some of which there is no church, were going to the city to hear mass. They were mostly Indians. Their dress, which, no doubt, was the same as that worn by their ancestors in ages past, was extremely simple, and by no means unbecoming. That of the women was a piece of blue cotton wrapped round the waist, and reaching only a little below the

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knees. The upper part of the body was scantily covered by a sort of chemise, with an aperture at the top for the head, and open at the sides. This part of their dress is called *guepil*, and is elaborately, but rudely, embroidered about the neck and shoulders with coloured thread. It is not, however, considered a very indispensible article, for in the village it is often laid aside. Their head-dress was two long tresses of their own straight black hair, interlaced with a red ribbon, and wreathed round the head in the form of a turban. They wore neither shoes nor stockings. This was also the case with the men, except a few who wore a sort of sandals, called *caycos*, which they cut out of a raw hide, and fasten to their feet with thongs. The rest of the male dress was a light suit of cotton, a straw hat or a coloured kerchief on the head, and a *chamarra*, which is made of coarse cloth, and answers all the purposes of cloak, blanket, carpet, and bed. The men were slender in form, but muscular. The fine figures and graceful carriage of some of the women were remarkable. The firm step and erect posture for which they are also distinguished, are attributed to their habit of carrying pitchers and other objects on their heads from early childhood. Both sexes conversed in their own native language, but were not ignorant of the Spanish, for many of them saluted us, as we passed, with a *Dios los guarde*, or a *vayan con la virgen.*

On entering the suburbs of St. Salvador, the appearance of the place was that of a large straggling country town, without any semblance of a populous city. As we advanced, however, we came to some good streets, and saw some respectable houses and public buildings. At length, we reached the *plaza*, and here we made a halt. I had the two letters of introduction, furnished by Don José, one to a Spanish, the other to a French gentleman, residing in that city. But being unwilling, on so slight a ground, to intrude upon any private family, I proceeded to inquire at the nearest shop whether anything like a ho-

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tel, or boarding-house, was to be found in the place. The person I applied to shrugged his shoulders, and said he believed not, unless, indeed, I was content to put up at the *meson*. I proceeded thither at once, and was shown into a damp, gloomy chamber, opening into the street, with four bare walls and a mud floor. There was not an article of furniture in the room, and this, as well as any attendance I might require, must be procured by myself. I turned away from this cheerless and vulgar caravansary, the resort of muleteers (whose only care is to accommodate their beasts,) and began to consider the course I should now pursue. The necessity of availing myself of my letters of introduction, was quite apparent; but which to prefer, whether the one addressed to the Frenchman, or that to the Spaniard, was a question that I hesitated to determine. I was induced, however, at the instigation of Mr. M., to decide in favour of the Frenchman, and it was fortunate that I did so.

This gentleman, whom the natives called Don Santiago, (the Spanish for Jacques,) had been an officer under Napoleon, and was a member of the Legion of Honour; he had abandoned his first profession to follow that of a merchant in America.

Mr. M. now left me, and went to seek a friend of his, who, he had reason to believe, would be glad to receive him.

The house of Don Santiago being pointed out to me, I went thither, and presenting him my letter, stated frankly my embarrassment, in consequence of not being able to find lodgings, and requested his assistance. This appeal was responded to by him in the most kind and liberal manner, for he at once offered me his house and table, and desired that I would consider myself at home.

I had scarcely accepted this friendly offer, when I received a visit from Mr. P., an American gentleman, and a resident in St. Salvador. He had come, he said, to make me a tender of his services, and added that he was Consul

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for the United States in that city, and had been for many years. On hearing this, Don Santiago, with the vivacity of a Frenchman, indulged in an exclamation of surprise. He had also resided a long time in St. Salvador, and was well acquainted with Mr. P., but had never heard till then of his holding such an office. "*Vraiment*," said he, "I never knew till now that you was American Consul here; I wonder if your Government knows it; *c'est bien plaisant*." I thanked Mr. P. for his kind offers, and observed to him that all my wants and wishes had been anticipated by Don Santiago.

The city of St. Salvador, at the time I visited it, was the seat of Government. The legislative and executive authorities, either from policy or convenience, had removed thither from Guatemala, which had always been the capital, and is the largest city of the Republic. The latter place, however, was still the residence of General Morazan, the President, who had taken the command of the army, and directed thence the operations of the troops.

St. Salvador, which may be considered the second city of Central America, is the head of the State, or Department, of that name, and contains a population of about fifteen thousand souls, including Indians and mulattoes. The other towns of any note in this State are St. Vicente, Santana, and Sonsonate. It is situated some fifty miles from the Pacific. Its trade and manufactures are very limited; the wealth of the place consisting chiefly in its agricultural productions. The city is laid out with considerable regularity; the streets crossing each other at right angles, except in the suburbs, where this plan has not been so strictly adhered to. In the centre of the city is the *plaza*, or market-place, three sides of which are lined with shops, with porticos before them, supported by a colonnade. On the other side is the church, a fine edifice, in a good style of architecture. There is also, on this side, a large house, where the members of the Legislature assemble when Congress is in session. The plaza just

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mentioned is crowded on market days with country-people, bringing the produce of their farms. All the fruits and vegetables of the tropics may then be seen exposed for sale on mats and *mantas* spread upon the ground. The variety of costumes and complexions, and the noise and bustle of the buyers and sellers, constitute a picturesque and animated scene. The primitive custom of trading by barter, I found, to my surprise, was still in existence there; Indian corn, or cocoa, being used in such cases as a substitute for a metallic currency.

One of my first cares after arriving at St. Salvador, was to obtain information in regard to the best mode of accomplishing, in safety, my journey to Guatemala, where the President of the Republic and the diplomatic agent of the United States were both residing. With this view, I called on the Vice-President, Mr. Ibarra, who received me with much affability and politeness. The apartment where I saw him was decorated at one extremity by a *dais*, or canopy, of red damask, with an arm-chair and table beneath, also covered with damask, forming altogether something like a throne. He was not sitting there, however, when I visited him, but at another table, covered with various papers and books, among which I noticed one object that seemed to me very unofficial, and rather out of place—a huge poignard, the sheath and handle of which were of silver, beautifully wrought. On my stating to him the object of my visit, he manifested the most sincere disposition to promote my views, as well on my account, as from respect to the Government of the United States. He would confer, he said, with the Secretary of State and of War on the subject, and directed me to call on that gentleman to learn his decision.

The next morning, accordingly, I waited on Don Miguel Alvarez, the Secretary alluded to. Of this gentleman a curious circumstance had been related to me, which was that his head had never been seen uncovered, for he always, and in every place, wore a handkerchief round it.

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On visiting him I found this to be the case, his head being covered by a piece of fine white cambric. I had some difficulty in suppressing a smile; and all I could do to keep my eyes from his head, they still wandered in that direction. This circumstance, however, was by no means injurious to his looks, for a finer and more intellectual countenance I have seldom seen, nor a brighter and more penetrating eye.

Mr. Alvarez received me with flattering marks of attention, and informed me that it had been determined to furnish me a military escort to take me to Guatemala, and that I could dispose of fifty men whenever I should think proper to undertake the journey. With this force, he said, I could proceed in perfect safety, and should have no occasion to retreat before any party of insurgents I might meet with, though twice as strong in number. This escort I was to take at a town, called *Sonsonate*, a few leagues distant from St. Salvador, but on my way from the city to that town I should be accompanied by an officer, who, for so short a distance, would be all the protection I should need.

An arrangement so favourable to my views, left me nothing to desire. It only now remained for me to fix the day when I should resume my journey. Before my departure, however, I resolved to attend one of the sessions of the legislative body, and having become acquainted with Don Manuel Rodriguez, a Senator, and a great admirer of the United States, I went in company with that gentleman to the Chamber of Deputies.

The sessions are held—as I have before observed—in a large house appropriated to that purpose. The members sit in a saloon, one half of which is separated by a balustrade, and is occupied by the public. At the opposite extremity sits the Speaker, under a canopy, with a table covered with damask before him, and a secretary at his side. The members—twenty-six in number—sit on chairs distributed along the walls, without any desks or tables be-

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fore them, and look as if they were there on a visit, or had come to a party. None of them were speaking, when I entered the chamber, nor was I able at first to comprehend the nature of the proceedings. I observed that they rose one after the other, and going to the Secretary, whispered something in his ear, which the latter immediately put in writing. On my asking Mr. Rodriguez for an explanation, he told me they were electing a Secretary. This they did by giving in a whisper the name of the candidate they voted for. Of the votes thus given, a list was made in writing, by which means ballots and ballot-boxes were dispensed with.

On the evening of the same day I went to a private ball, and had an opportunity of seeing some of the belles and fashionables of St. Salvador. The ladies were well dressed, though not exactly with that elegant simplicity which a good taste would suggest. They exhibited that passion for finery, jewels, and bright colours, so prevalent in the country. Some of them were very pretty, and of those that were not, nearly all had the advantage of being finely formed. They danced the old Spanish country-dances that are now going out of fashion in Spain, as also quadrilles and waltzes, and their performance in them was sufficiently correct and graceful.

Having fixed on the 30th of May—the third day of my arrival at St. Salvador—for my departure, I was visited, at the appointed time, by the officer who was to accompany me. He was a tall, athletic young man, and a half-Indian, and was mounted on a powerful mule. He was dressed in white cotton; the collar and cuffs of his jacket faced with red; his legs protected by *rodilleras*, and his heels armed with a ponderous pair of spurs. He wore a broad-brimmed glazed hat, with a band of gold lace round the crown; a yellow sash was wound tightly round his waist, but his dagger, instead of being stuck in his sash, was fastened to his right knee, on the outer side, by the tape of the rodilleras. A gold epaulette graced his right

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shoulder, and a huge long-sword, with an iron guard like a punch-bowl, hung by his side. Such was the equipment of this American janissary who was to be my protector.

For my own part, I had long felt the necessity of improving my appearance by a few articles of an ornamental as well as a useful kind; simplicity being by no means in accordance with the taste or fashion of the natives. Acting upon this idea, I provided myself with a silk sash, a pair of rodilleras, a Panama hat, and a neat *chamarra*, or mantle, to take place of a vulgar cloak, that was now banished to the bottom of a trunk. I also procured a pair of pistols, in lieu of those I had lost, and, with their holsters, attached them to my saddle. To the equipment of my mule I added a large sheep-skin, dyed blue, which covered three-fourths of the animal's length; and by way of correcting the plainness of my English bridle, I adorned it with a frontlet embroidered with coloured cotton.

Don Santiago insisted on our breakfasting before we commenced the journey. My Mameluke, the officer, said that he had already taken that meal, but would join us, nevertheless, just to keep us company. So well, however, did he perform his part at the table, that no one would have suspected the fact he had asserted.

I took leave of Don Santiago with an expression of the deep sense I entertained of his kindness. Mr. M., who had found that he could arrange his business in St. Salvador without proceeding any further, came to bid me adieu. My separation from him was painful, for I had found him an agreeable companion, and had become in a measure attached to him. We cheered each other by anticipating the pleasure we should have in meeting at Balize; but, alas! this anticipation was vain and groundless, for it was ordained above that I should never see him more.

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CHAPTER XIV.

The Ravine of Guaramal.—Village and Curate of Ateas.—Precautions against Surprise.—My Military Protector.—Volcano of Isalco.—A View of the Pacific.—Sonsonate.—A Night View of Volcanic Eruption.—Separation from my Protector.—The Escort.

Soon after leaving St. Salvador, we came to a wild tract of country, and travelled along a rough and rocky path, which, after a few miles, brought us to a deep ravine, called *el Barranco del Guaramal.* This ravine, formed by the waters descending from the neighbouring mountains, is overhung by rocks and bushes, and its banks, which rise to a height of thirty or forty feet, are covered with every variety of fern and moss, and with wild flowers and weeds without number. There was, in particular, a species of bamboo, the branches of which fell in beautiful festoons on either side of us, or spreading from bank to bank, formed verdant arches over our heads that looked like the work of art. The bed of the ravine, in some places, consisted of loose stones, and, in others, of solid rock, and was the channel of a stream which, it being now the dry season, was not more than two feet deep in any part. The place was a fantastic assemblage of rocks, trees, and water, forming altogether the most wild and romantic scene I had yet beheld.

This ravine we were obliged to follow for the space of half a league, making its rough and watery bed our road, for want of any other. At length we succeeded, by clambering up the banks, in gaining a smoother ground, and proceeded along a narrow path till we came to a dense forest. Here we had to unravel the mazes of a labyrinth

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of verdure for quite two hours, when we reached a plain, where we saw the village of Ateas.

Arriving at this village, my protector rode straight to the curate's house, and without waiting to be invited, dismounted, and announced himself and me to the Padre as his guests for the night. Notwithstanding the want of ceremony on our part, we were favourably received; we were not permitted to make use of our own provisions, but were supplied by our host, from his own larder, with refreshments for ourselves and the arrieros.

Although it was early in the afternoon when we arrived, and the distance travelled had not been much, we had determined, in consideration of the fatigue our beasts had undergone from the nature of the roads, to proceed no further till the following day. At night I was provided with a good bed. The officer attending me wrapped himself up in the folds of his chamarra, and stretched his limbs on a mat under the piazza of the house.

Starting early the next morning, we proceeded along the plain of Ateas, till we came to another wood. Here my conductor directed the muleteers not to lag behind, examined his pistols, and asked me if mine were in proper order. He observed, at the same time, that this was a necessary precaution to prevent our being taken by surprise; for though he apprehended no danger from the insurgents in that quarter, there was a possibility of our falling in with deserters and fugitives from jail, who might be roaming about the country. He then placed himself at the head of our little party, and rode on in silence till we passed the wood.

The conversation being now resumed, he gave me some insight into the instructions he had received from the Secretary of State in regard to myself. He had been made responsible, he said, for my safety, till he consigned me to the care of the officer who was to command the escort. It was owing to the opinion entertained of his personal qualities, that he had been appointed to this commission,

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on the execution of which his reputation depended; "and," said he, "I would rather be cut to pieces than that you should receive the slightest injury." I then learnt from him that he had commenced his military career as a private soldier, and had risen by his own merit to the rank of lieutenant which he then held. He had distinguished himself at the time when the country was invaded by the Mexicans under Filisola, and had served under General Morazan, to whom, and to General Saget, he was personally known.

By an easy transition we came to the subject of the existing revolution, and its author the famed Carrera. "How, if we should meet with that rebel hero in person?" said I. "What better fortune could I wish?" he replied. "Set him before me on this road, man to man, and well armed and well mounted as I am, and, *vive Dios!* you shall see me return to St. Salvador with his recreant head hanging from my saddle-bow." These words I have no doubt he would have made good; for although—as the reader will have observed—the lieutenant was a little given to boasting, this defect is so common with his countrymen, that it is not always an argument against courage.

As we proceeded on our way, a deep rumbling noise was heard, like distant thunder. It was occasioned by the eruptions of the volcano of Isalco, from which we were only a few miles distant. A little further on, having ascended an eminence, we came in full view of the volcano, and could see the smoke bursting in a thick column from the crater. The scoria and ashes emitted by the eruption fell in a shower round the mountain, and a stream of lava, though not then visible to the eye, could be traced by a line of smoke reaching from the crater to the base of the volcano. We approached within a mile of the base of this burning mountain, where the ground was covered with pumice stones and fragments of solid lava. It was a volcano of recent formation; its commencement dating not more than fifty years back. It broke out from the top of

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a hill of no great elevation; but the quantity of stones and lava emitted by it since its first eruption, have already formed a respectable mountain. The peculiarity of this volcano is, that the eruptions are almost continual; so that if not exhausted by constant performance, it will become in time one of the most remarkable in the country. During one of its fiercest eruptions, a stream of lava so copious was emitted, that it reached within a hundred yards of the village of Isalco, situated about three miles from the base of the volcano, laying waste a large tract of cultivated land, and dooming a fertile soil to perpetual sterility.

Passing through the village of Isalco just mentioned, which has a thriving appearance, and can boast of a church and some good houses, we came, after a short ride, to a very pretty Indian village, situated in the midst of a grove of cocoa-nut trees. The huts, which were built of cane and palm leaves, were scattered round without any order, and the inhabitants, from their dress, language, and habits, seemed to exist in the same primitive state as when the country was discovered.

As we approached the town of Sonsonate, a view of the Pacific Ocean, which I beheld for the first time, awakened within me emotions of surprise and pleasure that I will not pretend to describe. It was distinctly visible towards the south-west, and distant about fifteen miles. I had now fairly traversed this part of the continent from sea to sea, and I gazed upon the blue expanse of the Pacific as if its waters exhibited something different from those of other seas. How little did I think, two months before, that I should so soon, or ever, have beheld this queen of oceans!

It was early in the day when we arrived at Sonsonate, where, in virtue of an introduction from an English gentleman with whom I had become acquainted at St. Salvador, I was kindly received by one of the most respectable merchants of the place.

This is the largest town in the State of St. Salvador, next to the capital of said State. It is situated about eight

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miles from the sea, and is the principal part of Central America on the Pacific, being the nearest harbour for ships from Panama and Peru trading with Guatemala. The productions of the neighbouring country, destined for Europe, owing to the difficulty and expense attending their conveyance over-land to the Atlantic coast, are often shipped at this port, notwithstanding the long and circuitous voyage to be performed; and, for the same reason, it is the port through which are imported many of the foreign manufactures intended for the south-western coast of Central America.

On the afternoon of the day of my arrival, I again mounted my mule, and, in company with one of the inhabitants of the place, rode down to the beach to take another view of the sea. I not only omitted asking the lieutenant to join me, but declined the offer he had repeatedly made to keep me company. This he took very much to heart, and on seeing me mount, though I promised not to be absent over a couple of hours, he exhibited such symptoms of uneasiness, that I expected nothing less than his putting me under an interdict, and that my excursion would be prevented. He evidently considered me as not possessing the right of locomotion, any further than he might think proper to permit. He regarded me as a prisoner of state, or as a valuable piece of merchandize which had been confided to his care, and which he was bound to deliver in good condition. On my return, the gentleman I staid with assured me that my lieutenant, in a fit of impatience during my absence, had actually saddled his mule, and was only prevented from starting in quest of me by his representing to him the folly of such a step.

That evening, at a late hour, I had another view of the volcano, the eruptions of which, in the darkness of the night, are infinitely more striking and magnificent than in the day-time. At intervals of half an hour, a blaze would issue from the crater to the height of two hundred feet,

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illuminating the sky, and casting a lurid light over the mountains. These eruptions were preceded by a report like a clap of distant thunder, or the discharge of artillery; but though fierce, they were of short duration, for after blazing for a few seconds they subsided, when the burning lava that streamed down the mountain, shone brightly and awfully through the darkness of the night. It was one of the grandest and most imposing spectacles I had ever witnessed.

The following morning my worthy lieutenant came to take leave of me. I had, in compliance with his wishes, made some interest to obtain him the command of the escort that was to take me to Guatemala; but another officer, he said, had been appointed, who would call on me forthwith to confer with me on the subject of our journey. As I shook his brawny dark hand, I felt the necessity of presenting him some little token of friendship, and taking up a very pretty silver-mounted dirk that I had bought in New York, I presented it to him with a request that he would keep it for my sake. He promised to do so, as with a smile of complacence he put the dirk under his sash. He then asked me to give him a certificate of his conduct, which I immediately wrote out. But on my desiring him to satisfy himself by reading it, a deep blush crimsoned the dark features of the lieutenant: he could not read! And thus a brave soldier, who might one day have been a general, was doomed, so long as he followed his profession, to abide in the humble station of a subaltern.

All that day was employed in preparations for our departure on the next. The officer who had succeeded to the lieutenant, apprised me that he was in readiness with the escort, which, agreeably to my wishes, would consist of twenty-five infantry and twelve cavalry, and Mr. S., the English gentleman whom I have already mentioned, and who had just arrived in Sonsonate, kindly offered to accompany me during the first day of the journey.

Accordingly, the next morning—the third of June—the

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habitual stillness of the house where I staid was disturbed at an early hour by the clattering of hoofs, and rattling of arms, as soldiers and horses, and muleteers and mules, came crowding into the court-yard. At length I took leave of the gentleman who had so kindly entertained me, and mounting my mule, we sallied forth amidst a crowd of ragged boys who stared and wondered at us as we passed.

I will not undertake to say that the soldiers of the escort were as brilliant in appearance as those of the National Guard of Paris, but neither were they so dilapidated and torn as the men with whom Falstaff refused to march through Coventry. They were not encumbered with havresacks, or baggage of any kind; their firelocks, accoutrements, and chamarras, being all they had to carry. The dress, both of horse and foot, was of coarse serge, with red cuffs and collars, and straw hats. Some of them had neither shoes nor stockings; others wore only *caycos*, or sandals. The cavalry, to say the truth, were miserably mounted, but with their long lances decorated with bannerets of blue and white, they had a picturesque, if not a very military appearance. The order of march was the following: the *comandante*, or officer of the escort, with the infantry, formed the head of the party; then came Mr. S. and myself, with our servants, then the muleteers with the baggage, and, finally, the cavalry, who brought up the rear.

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CHAPTER XV.

Tito.—Indians of Aguisalco.—Arrival at Aguachapa.—The Postmaster.—His Daughters.—The Boiling Lakes.

I HAVE omitted mentioning that on my way from St. Salvador to Sonsonate, I was joined by a humble wayfarer, who, of his own accord, and with my tacit consent, attached himself to me in the capacity of a domestic. He was somewhat of a character. His name was Tito, or rather, this was the soubriquet he was known by. He called himself a courier of General Morazan, and said, that having delivered his despatches at St. Salvador, he was now on his way back to Guatemala. These despatches he had carried in his hat, where, being covered with a false crown made to fit exactly, they were effectually concealed. By taking bye-paths, and going considerably out of his way, he had succeeded in avoiding the rebel parties during the first days of his journey; but at length he fell in with one of these bands, and was stopped. They questioned him, and searched him all over, and talked of shooting him as a spy. Poor Tito thought his last hour was come; for he knew that if his despatches were discovered, he was a dead man. Fortunately they never thought of examining his hat. He was not permitted, however, to go his way; a rusty musket was put into his hands, and he was ordered to follow the party. The first service that Tito was appointed to, was that of a sentinel, when he was stationed near the ruins of a church in a village. This was a favourable opportunity for getting rid of his despatches. Accordingly, as soon as he was left alone, he took them out of his hat, and thrust them under a heap of

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bricks and mortar. On the night of the next day, after following the rebels a few leagues, he was ordered to perform the duty of sentinel again. But this time Tito had no idea of waiting to be relieved, for scarcely had the corporal turned his back, when he "ordered arms," placed his musket against a tree to watch for him, and took to his heels. He fled in the darkness of the night, through wood and glen, and over hill and mountain, with such rapidity, that fear seemed to have put wings upon his feet. In an incredibly short space of time he reached the village where his despatches were concealed, and having recovered them, continued his route till he arrived at St. Salvador.

To resume our narrative. The first place we came to, after leaving Sonsonate, was an Indian village called Aguisalco. Here I was forcibly struck by the singularity of a fact which I have already alluded to: the existence of the aborigines in all their original simplicity, and their adherence to the language and habits of their ancestors, even while living in the vicinity of large and populous towns. In Aguisalco, the arts and usages of civilized life seemed to be utterly unknown. The greater part of the individuals of both sexes were totally uncovered from the waist upwards; the children were unencumbered by any clothes whatever. They inhabited little huts without windows, lived upon plantains and tortillas, and slept in hammocks.

A few miles further, we came to Apaneja, another Indian village, very similar to the one just described; and here we suspended our march for a couple of hours.

Leaving this place, we travelled through a mountainous and woody country, gradually ascending in our progress, till we came to an elevated plain, or table-land, surrounded by volcanic mountains. In the centre of this plain there is a lake, and near it the town of Aguachapa. The smoke could be seen issuing from the tops of the mountains, and even from fissures in the rocks quite near us. In several places the ground had sunk in, and formed apertures of greater or less extent, which emitted a dense vapour of a

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strong sulphureous smell, and, I was told, were full of boiling water. Indeed, the whole of that tract of country is of a volcanic character, and seems to be suspended over an abyss of fire.

On arriving at Aguachapa, the officer and his men were provided with quarters by the alcalde. Mr. S., who had some slight acquaintance with the postmaster, obtained accommodations at his house, not only for himself, but for me and Tito. This was another instance of the little ceremony used in applying for lodgings, and of the kind and cheerful manner with which hospitality is dispensed to travellers. The postmaster, who was also a merchant, was a native of Spain. He lived in one of the best houses in the place. His family consisted of two daughters, one of whom possessed an accomplishment by no means common in that part of the country:—she could play on the piano. I certainly never should have suspected the existence of such an instrument in Aguachapa. The young ladies were not a little proud of it.

The next morning a lowering sky threatened a day of rain. The weather, thus far, had been invariably fine, but the rainy season was now at hand, and what is here called winter was about to commence. In consequence of the aspect of the weather, we postponed our departure to the following day. In the afternoon, however, the clouds passed off, and the sun shone as brightly as ever. It was too late to resume our journey, but an opportunity was afforded for visiting the volcanic phenomena in the immediate vicinity of the town. A party was accordingly formed, and we proceeded on horseback to a low, barren plain, where we saw the boiling lakes that I have alluded to above, when speaking of the apertures in the ground emitting a dense vapour.

Of these lakes, or ponds, there are several; and they occupy a considerable tract of land. The largest is about a hundred yards in circumference. In this, as in all the others, the water, which was extremely turbid, and of

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a light brown colour, was boiling furiously, and rising in bubbles three or four feet high. The steam ascended in a dense white cloud, and spread for a considerable distance round, as I stood for some time on the bank of this natural cauldron, gazing with awe upon its tremendous vortex. The heat was so great on the surface of the ground, near the borders of the lakes, that had our feet not been protected by thick shoes, it could not have been endured. On thrusting a knife into the ground, the blade, when drawn out, after a few seconds, was so hot as to burn the fingers. Our horses, which, according to the custom of the country, were not shod, exhibited such symptoms of uneasiness, owing to the state of the ground beneath them, or in consequence of the strong smell of the steam, that it was found necessary to leave them tied at some distance from the scene. In some places a little column of smoke issued fiercely from a hole in the ground, while in others, the water, in a boiling state, gushed out like a fountain.* The ebullitions of these lakes, or springs, have formed, on the borders of them, a deposit of the finest clay, and of every variety of colours. But it does not appear that the natives have profited by the facility thus afforded them for the manufacture of pottery. And although nothing would be more easy than to establish there the finest mineral baths in the world, this object has never occupied their attention.

* In relation to these lakes, Le Sage's translation of *Querubin de la Ronda*, contains the following passage: "Auprès de la ville de Trinidad (Aguachapa) on voit dans un endroit fort bas, sortir de la terre, sans discontinuation, une épaisse et noire fumée, melée quelquefois de souffre et de tourbillons de feu."

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CHAPTER XVI.

A Night at the Hacienda del Coco.—Tito again.—The Alarm.—A Scene by Moonlight.—Carrera.—The "Cuesta de la Leona."—Stronghold of a Rebel Chief.—Another View of the Pacific.—The Rebels in Sight.—Valley of Petapa.—Lake and Volcano of Amatitan.—Another Alarm.—Approach to Guatemala.—View of the City.—Arrival there.—Separation from Tito.

We took up our march again on the second day of our arrival at Aguachapa. The postmaster, availing himself of this opportunity for forwarding the mail to Guatemala, entrusted me with the public correspondence. Mr. S., whom I had found a most amiable and accomplished man, took his leave of me, and returned to Sonsonate.

The first act of the commandant, when we were fairly on the road, showed that he considered himself in an enemy's country. Four men were sent, as scouts, in advance of the party, to a distance of a hundred yards, with orders, on discovering any rebel band, to fire a shot, and retreat upon the escort. The officer himself kept a sharp look-out, especially on passing a defile, or a barranco.

The difference of the temperature here, from that of the coast, was quite perceivable, for the atmosphere was much cooler, though not so moist; and here and there I observed some of the productions of the milder climates. Of those peculiar to southern latitudes, the most remarkable were the phosphorus tree, the Indian rubber tree, a beautiful species of lilac, and a tree bearing an acorn of a bright red colour in a black cup.

About noon we came to one of the principal rivers in the country, called the *Verapaz*, which we forded. Pursuing our route, we arrived, without any accident or inci-

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dent whatever, at a small farm, called *Hacienda del Coco*, where we halted for the night, having performed our day's journey at one heat and without stopping. Here, the officer, after securing lodgings for himself and me, quartered his men under a shed open to the four winds, and situated on one side of the house. On the other side, the horses were piquetted in a row, and in the intervening space the soldiers were made to pile their arms. Two sentinels were then stationed in a position from which they could overlook all the approaches to the hacienda. The locality of the house, which was an isolated eminence in the midst of a plain, was a military position the most perfect, and capable of being defended by a small number against a considerable force.

Tito, by my directions, distributed to the men an allowance of brandy and segars: an act which at once raised me high in their esteem, and even obtained for Tito an importance he had not before enjoyed. He, moreover, availed himself successfully of an opportunity afforded him here of displaying his talents as a caterer; for out of very slender means he prepared a tolerable supper for the officer and myself. This I found to be his forte, for he was fond of living well. He would not eat tortillas when wheat bread was to be had, nor drink brandy if he could get wine. He was active and serviceable in small matters; but anything like hard work he cordially abhorred. Thus there was no getting him to assist the arriero in loading the baggage. It was labour enough for him to saddle my mule. Another defect of his was that he talked incessantly, and was too fussy and bustling, too much of a *faiseur d'embarras*. In short, he was a light-hearted soul, possessing a good deal of humour and anecdote, and, in character, more a Frenchman than a Spaniard.

At night I followed the example of the commandant, by "turning in" without taking off any part of my clothes, except my spurs. And these, perhaps, were the last article I ought to have parted with; for, in case of being taken

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by surprise, and being obliged to run, they might have proved the most useful part of my equipment. My bed was a long wooden bench, with my chamarra for a mattress. In the dead of the night, and just as I had fallen into a gentle slumber, I was awakened by the cry of, *quien vive?* harshly uttered by one of the sentinels. The officer, who had also heard it, was on his feet in an instant, and ran out to ascertain the cause of alarm. Fortunately, there was none. The sentinel had challenged a man who had approached him, but who proved to be one of the dependents of the farm. Silence was now restored, and those who had been disturbed once more composed themselves to rest. I tried to do so likewise, but in vain: sleep had completely fled from me. I walked out into the open air, and stood for a few minutes contemplating the scene around. The moon was coursing through the light and fleecy clouds that partially overcast the sky, and shedding a fitful radiance. On one side were the soldiers, stretched upon the ground in groups; on the other, the horses, some of them perfectly still, as if sleeping, and others trying to collect from the ground a few grains of scattered provender. Here the piled muskets glistened in the moon-beam, and there, the sentinel, pacing to and fro, kept his solitary watch. A dark confused prospect of wood and mountain was just discernible in the distance; and a perfect silence prevailed around, uninterrupted except by the measured step of the sentinel, or the occasional neighing of a horse.

At day-break I was awakened by the beating of the réveille. By sun-rise we had again taken up our march. The road now led over a rocky, barren plain, and, by a gradual ascent, to a mountainous ridge, after passing which we descended into the valley of Jalpatagua. At the town of this name we made a halt, as well for the purpose of taking some refreshments, as of procuring fresh horses for the cavalry; for three or four of those we had brought with us had broken down on the road, and their

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riders had been obliged to follow on foot. A detention of a few hours was also incurred, in consequence of a report that a considerable band of Carrera's people was hovering about the neighbourhood. A scout was forthwith dispatched to ascertain the fact. On his return we learned that one of the most noted leaders of the revolution had been seen in that vicinity, but with a small number of men only, and that he had betaken himself to a village in the mountains. This village was situated at no great distance from the road we were to pass; but the circumstances of the case were not such as to justify any further detention, and we resumed our march.

After proceeding a few miles, we came to a steep rocky mountain, called *la Cuesta de la Leona*. The ascent was by a narrow winding path, sufficiently abrupt and difficult. I happened to be in the advance, and was the first to reach the summit; whence I looked back upon our wild and motley *cavalgada*, horse and foot, and baggage mules, forming a long line, and toiling in a zig-zag direction up the mountain; the bannerets of the cavalry fluttering in the air, and the muskets of the infantry glittering in the sun. Of the foot soldiers, some held on by the tails of the horses, or grappled with the rocks and bushes to help themselves along, and others, to facilitate their progress, had nearly stripped themselves of their clothes, which were carried by their comrades who were mounted.

Beyond this mountain, there were others equally wild and lofty. High up, near the crest of one of them, and embosomed amid rocks and bushes, was a group of huts like a bird's nest, which the commandant pointed out to me, saying that it was the village where the rebel chief, alluded to above, had retreated. There he was, like an eagle in his eyry, which was almost inaccessible, and, doubtless, watching us with a wistful eye as we passed beneath.

Further on, an opening in the mountains afforded a wide and charming vista of plains stretching far away to

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the horizon. Looking in that direction, a long blue streak just between the earth and the sky, arrested my attention. It was the Pacific again! I hailed the great ocean once more, and was the more agreeably surprised at seeing it now, from the impression I was under, that we had left that sea far behind. But though we had diverged considerably from the line of the coast, the elevated position we had attained enabled us to obtain another, though a dim and distant, view of it. There was a singularity in the appearance of the sea, as I beheld it: it seemed to be higher than the land, and as if floating in the air.

About sun-set, after a fatiguing ride over rough and difficult roads, we reached a place called *el Oratorio*. Here the alcalde was required to furnish rations for the escort, and lodgings for ourselves. This requisition was complied with; and then Tito had to exercise his ingenuity once more in providing our evening meal. In pursuance of this object he brought me an armadillo, which, he said, was a delicate morsel. But the delicacy came in such a questionable shape, that I was fain to decline it. After beating about awhile, he brought me an old rooster, which proving acceptable, he killed, and, by some means or other, made sufficiently tender. On this the officer and I made our supper, leaving him and the arrieros to feast on the armadillo.

Our next day's march brought us at an early hour to a river, called *los Esclavos*, where I was struck with the novelty of a magnificent stone bridge, of nine arches, and about sixty paces in length. It was built in 1792, and is thrown over the river at a point where the banks are high and precipitous, and the current extremely rapid. A few miles beyond, we came to a small town having a crabbed Indian name, which sounded somewhat like *Cojiniquilapa*. Here we halted an hour or two, and starting again, pursued our route until we came in view of a hacienda, where, having now performed a regular day's journey, we

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resolved on passing the night. This hacienda, called *el Corral*, was a large estate, in which nopal, maize, and other productions, were extensively cultivated. The house was placed unreservedly at our disposal. It was large and substantial, and had a little chapel annexed to it, surmounted by a bell, for calling the people to mass. There was a spacious hall in the house, and a fine piazza in front of it. The latter was assigned to the soldiers; the horses and mules were confined in a "potrero," hard by, where they were abundantly supplied with provender.

This time, instead of taxing the hospitality of our host for a supper, we were enabled to invite him to a very good one, prepared by Tito, whose good fortune it had been, on the road, to fall in with a fine piece of venison, which he bought, and also some cream-cheese and a bunch of plantains.

We learned from the owner of the estate that a few nights before, a small party of marauders had made their appearance before his house, demanding admission. On being refused, they attempted to force an entrance. He was posted within with his servants, and warned them that he would shoot the first man that passed the threshold. After some consultation among themselves, they drew off their forces. He showed us his little armoury, consisting of ten or a dozen fire-arms, besides swords and poniards. He said, that on seeing us approach, he had been in some alarm, apprehending a second attack, but, on a nearer view, had become satisfied in regard to our character and intentions.

A heavy shower fell in the course of the night. It was the first rain that had fallen in any quantity for six months. The next day we found the roads, in consequence, rather heavy, and the atmosphere considerably cooler. The latter circumstance, however, was also attributable, in a great measure, to the elevation we had attained, for in our progress from the coast, we had gradually, but continually ascended, and were now on the high table-lands in the vicinity of Guatemala.

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During this day's journey, the only incident worth mentioning was the appearance of some fifty of Carrera's people, who showed themselves on a height near the road, but hardly within gun-shot. They gave us a shout as we passed, and abused the soldiers of the escort, but exhibited no disposition to interrupt our march. They were uniformly dressed in chamarras of a dark-coloured cloth. The weapons they were armed with could not be distinguished.

Passing a rocky ridge, we came to one of those charming valleys that occur so frequently in travelling through Central America, and which I have endeavoured to describe in other parts of this narrative. It was enclosed by a range of sloping hills and lofty sierras, or mountains, among which might be seen, towering over the rest, the volcano of Amatitan. In the plain below, the great lake bearing the same name expands to the view, nine miles in length and three in breadth. This lake is fathomless at a distance of fifty yards from the shore; at least, no bottom has been found with a line of three hundred fathoms. There is a tradition that the Indians, on the arrival of the Spaniards, threw into this lake all their riches. One extremity loses itself round the foot of the volcano; the other is closed in by a natural barrier of rocks and hills. The mountain and the lake, and the general appearance of the country, give evidence of some great natural convulsion. The road, for a few miles, led along the shores of the lake, and then through a highly cultivated country, till we arrived at the town of Petapa, situated on the borders of the valley. At this town we came to a halt, after performing a day's journey of twenty-seven miles. The fatigue of the soldiers in this march had been greater than usual; some of the cavalry had been obliged to dismount and lead their horses. They were, accordingly, at the request of Tito, allowed a larger allowance than usual of segars and brandy, in addition to their rations. The officer and myself were billeted on one of the inhabitants.

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In the course of the night, at a late hour, we were alarmed in no slight degree by the arrival at Petapa of a detachment of soldiers, of whose character and designs we were utterly ignorant. The officer of the escort, suspecting they might be a party of the enemy, immediately roused his men, and put them under arms. Happily this alarm, like the one previous, was attended by no disagreeable results; the detachment consisting of soldiers of the Federal Government who were exploring the country.

The next morning, after travelling a few miles over a mountainous tract, we entered upon the vast plains surrounding the city of Guatemala, from which we were now distant only twelve miles. We had another and a nearer view of the volcano of Amatitan, but it was not in a state of eruption. Wide meadows, enlivened by numerous herds of cattle and horses, were spread before us, extending in some directions as far as the eye could reach. Several pretty hamlets also occurred at intervals, with little plantations round them of maize, plantain, and sugar-cane. The road, too, was enlivened by a number of passengers going and coming, on horseback and on foot; a circumstance which in itself indicated our approach to a populous city. At length we came in full view of the city of Guatemala. The domes and spires of its lofty churches and public buildings glittered in the sun, while the white walls of the houses gleamed through the trees and foliage of its numerous gardens. The environs of the city were verdant with shady groves and cultured slopes. The surrounding country was a succession of wide undulating plains, terminating, on one side, with two volcanic mountains, and, on the other, with a rocky ridge, beyond which could be seen, dimly defined in the horizon, the lofty peaks of the Andes.

Just before coming to the city, I took leave of my escort, and went forward with Pito and the arriero who was charged with my baggage. The poor soldiers, who had brought me in safety to my journey's end, were not forgot-

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ten, nor the patience with which they had endured so much fatigue on my account, nor their docility and admirable subordination; and, in separating from them, I made them, in the manner that I knew would be most agreeable, a slight compensation for their services.

I entered the city through one of the principal streets, which was well paved, and provided with side-walks. The houses, though but one story high, and indeed the town in general, had a neat and respectable appearance. I was conducted to the house of the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States. This gentleman, though much surprised by my arrival, which had been quite unexpected, received me with every mark of kindness and attention.

Having no further occasion for the services of the quondam courier, I made him a small pecuniary remuneration, accompanied by a few kind words, and an intimation that we must part. His countenance brightened for a moment at sight of the money, (the amount of which perhaps exceeded his expectations,) but fell again immediately, and assumed a strong expression of sorrow and surprise. He was evidently loth to quit me. He would gladly have stayed with me a little longer. But I gave no encouragement, and he turned to go away, then came back to thank me again, and once more looked round, as he left the room, to give me an opportunity of recalling him. Poor Tito! I was really affected by the attachment he had conceived for me in so short a time, but I was constrained to let him go.

It was the 9th of June when I arrived at Guatemala; twenty-eight days since the commencement of my journey at Izabal, and about two months since my departure from Washington.

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CHAPTER XVII.

Sketch of Central America.—Bays and Harbours.—Rivers.—Lakes.—Projected Canal of Nicaragua.—Mountains and Volcanoes.—Vegetable and Animal Productions.—Mines.

HAVING availed myself, during the brief period of my stay in the city of Guatemala, of such opportunities as occurred, which were not many, of obtaining information in regard to Central America, I will venture to offer a few remarks on this interesting portion of the western hemisphere.

The territory called Central America extends from the eighth to the eighteenth degree of north latitude, and is bounded on the north by Mexico and the bay of Honduras; on the east by the Caribbean sea and Veragua; and on the west and south by the Pacific ocean. It may be considered as a great isthmus, separating the Atlantic from the Pacific, and connecting the two grand divisions of Spanish America. This isthmus presents a coast-line of nearly a thousand miles on either side. Its breadth from sea to sea in no place exceeds four hundred miles, and at the narrowest point is scarcely one hundred.

The situation of this country is peculiarly favourable for commercial intercourse with every other part of the world. On the south-western side its shores are washed by the Pacific; and the whole of the northern border lies open to the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. Both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts are indented with numerous bays and harbours, of which the principal is the bay of Honduras, in the latter sea, comprising the ports of Truxillo, Izabal, and Omoa, and communicating with the

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interior by means of a river which leads up to the lake called *Golfo dulce*, already described. In the same bay is situated the port of St. Thomas, of which mention has also been made in another part of this narrative. On the Pacific shore is the bay of Conchagua, and the ports of la Union, Realejo, Sonsonate, and Istapa, of which the latter is the nearest to Guatemala, but is only a road-stead, and by no means safe, owing to the heavy swell constantly rolling in from the ocean.

The most considerable of the Central American islands are Bonaca and Ruatan, in the bay of Honduras; the archipelago of Chiriqui, in the Carribean sea; and the islands in the bay of Conchagua, in the south.

The principal rivers are the Usumasinta, which falls into the bay of Campeachy; the Polochie, which discharges itself into the Golfo dulce; the Balize, the Hondo, and the Motagua, also called the Gualan, which flow into the bay of Honduras; the Pasa, Lempa, and Esclavos, which contribute to the Pacific. These rivers are navigable for many miles into the interior. There are others of less note, which are not navigable. The country also abounds in warm and medicinal springs.

The lakes most deserving of notice are those called Golfo dulce, or Great Fresh Water Lake of Izabal, and Amatitan, which have been mentioned before, and especially the great lake of Nicaragua, which is connected with that of Leon.

The lake of Nicaragua is situated in the province of that name, at a distance of about a hundred miles from the Atlantic ocean, with which it communicates by the river St. Juan. This river is now considered the most advantageous and most practicable point for establishing a connexion between the two oceans. It is believed to be navigable for vessels of three or four feet draft from its port to the lake; and for vessels of twice that depth, as far as the point where the falls commence, which are the great difficulty to be surmounted. The surface of the lake, accord-

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ing to the statement of a Spanish engineer who executed a survey in 1781, is forty-six feet above the level of the Pacific; its depth, about fifteen fathoms. The distance from that sea to the south-western extremity of the lake of Leon, which communicates, as before stated, with that of Nicaragua, is, by the report of the said engineer, fifteen geographical miles, and the intervening land is said to be sufficiently level to admit of the opening of a canal that should unite those lakes with the Pacific.

Should the grand work of uniting the waters of the two oceans be undertaken and accomplished, a revolution would be caused in the commercial world, attended with results in the highest degree beneficial to the inhabitants of both hemispheres. This part of the continent would become the great thoroughfare of nations; and Central America would at once rise to an importance, both commercial and political, which otherwise she never can attain.

Proposals for opening this communication were made by a company of English merchants in 1824. The following year similar proposals were made by some merchants of the United States. But in neither case does it appear that any specific attention was given to the subject by the Government of the country. Subsequently, a proposition to the same effect was made by the Dutch, which was admitted, and the King of the Netherlands was to be stockholder to the amount of one half of the capital that might be invested. But, from whatever cause, this plan also fell through, and matters remain in the same state as before.

It seems singular that a subject so peculiarly interesting to the United States should not have attracted more attention in our country. The enterprize, however, could only be successfully undertaken under the auspices of the Government, and with the sanction of Congress. Were the subject properly recommended to the consideration of the national legislature, its importance could hardly fail of being

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perceived and duly appreciated; and the result, whatever it might be, could not but reflect credit on the administration. There is also reason to believe, that any steps that our diplomatic agent in Guatemala might be instructed to take towards a negotiation with the Central American Government on this subject, would be met by that Government with alacrity. There exists on the part of the people and authorities of that country a decided predilection for Americans, and for every thing that is American. They imitate the institutions, the laws, the policy of the United States, and look up to this country as their great political model. They at one time solicited to be admitted into the Union as a new State in our Republic. While France and England are trying in vain to effect a treaty with their Government, the United States have renewed, or are on the point of renewing, one that was concluded several years since. Thus, every thing seems to favour and facilitate the accomplishment of an enterprise, which, besides enhancing in no slight degree the national glory of the United States, would be productive of the greatest commercial advantages to its citizens.

That some difficulties exist towards realizing this object, cannot be denied. One is the disturbed state of Central America at the present moment, and the civil commotions to which it is subject at all times. Another would be to obtain a grant of land on each side of the river St. Juan, with the sovereignty of the country ceded, without which a sufficient security would not be afforded to the persons and properties of our citizens who might establish themselves there. But these difficulties are not insurmountable; and even should they prove so, the attempt to remove them would be itself a glory, and the want of success an honourable failure.

But returning to the subject of this chapter: the face of the country is generally mountainous. It presents, as I have heretofore observed, a succession of sierras, or moun-

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tains, with intervening vallies, except in the neighbourhood of Guatemala, where the table-lands commence, which are vast undulating plains, spreading for many leagues around. All the physical and natural peculiarities of other countries are united in the formation of the general aspect of Central America: delightful valleys teeming with animal and vegetable life, extensive prairies clothed with verdure, gentle rivulets and foaming torrents, huge broken rocks, inaccessible mountains and fiery volcanoes, dense gloomy forests, grassy knolls, and shady groves. The same variety is remarkable in the climate, as will be shown anon, and in the vegetable productions of the country.

That elevated range forming the spine of the whole continent, styled in South America the Andes, and in the United States the Rocky Mountains, may be traced in its regular continuance through Central America, though at a less elevation, dividing this country into two grand sections; the waters on the north of the ridge falling into the Atlantic, and on the south flowing into the Pacific.* This great range approaches to the Atlantic, and recedes from the Pacific, in Central America, in a greater degree than in any other part of the American continent, and is more abrupt in its slope towards the former ocean than towards the latter. It traverses the western part of the State of Guatemala, and constitutes that region called *los Altos*, or highlands, of Totonicapan and Quesaltenango. It is interrupted in its course by two transversal vallies, in one of which is situated the lake of Nicaragua; in the other are the plains of Comayagua. Nearly the whole coast of the Pacific is bordered by an alluvial plain, varying in breadth; and the line where this plain

* A rivulet is pointed out in the vicinity of Guatemala that may be considered a curiosity. At a little distance from its source it branches off into two streams, one of which can be traced to the Atlantic; the other flows into the Pacific.

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joins the base of the range, is crowned by a succession of volcanoes. Of these, the most remarkable are Amatitan, Isalco, Cosiguina, and another called the water volcano, from the circumstance of its emitting torrents of water instead of fire. The latter is said to be the loftiest of the volcanoes, its summit being 13,000 feet above the level of the sea. There are a vast number of others of less note. They are supposed to be the great causes of the earthquakes in Central America; yet the country in their vicinity is more thickly inhabited than elsewhere. Omotepeque is the only inhabited island in the lake of Nicaragua, and is at the same time the only one in the lake in which a volcano is found.

One of the great advantages of this country, is that of enjoying a climate peculiar to itself; a mild, temperate, and delicious climate, which has none of the varieties of the seasons; for although the tropical heats are experienced in the low lands along the coast, in the rest of the country a perpetual spring prevails, and the earth is clothed with a rich and never-failing verdure. The cause of this temperature is the great elevation of this part of the American continent, which is some five thousand feet above the level of the sea, while the summits of some of the mountains rise to twelve or fourteen thousand feet above that level. In the interior, the variation of the thermometer of Fahrenheit is not more than 15° in the course of the year, the mercury seldom rising above 75° or falling below 60. The difference between the temperature of the coasts and that of the *altos*, or highlands, is much greater, and comprises, under the same degree of latitude, the extremes of heat and cold. The climate is also very healthy, except in the immediate vicinity of the coasts and on the banks of the great rivers, where fevers and other diseases are prevalent.

The seasons are divided into the dry and the rainy: the first, which is called summer, lasts from January to

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June, and the other, which is winter, comprises the remaining six months of the year. Nothing can be more regular than the commencement of the rains at the period presented by Nature, and their cessation after they have lasted their appointed time. It is also a singular fact, that the rain scarcely ever falls in the morning, but almost always about two hours after the sun has passed the meridian. As the country is everywhere provided with numerous springs and rivers, the continuation of dry weather for nearly six months is not attended with any great inconvenience. In one respect it is highly advantageous, as it is not only favourable, but indispensable, to the production of cochineal, one of the great staple commodities of the country.

The soil in Central America is for the most part exceedingly fertile. In the plains, and especially in the vallies, it is a dark rich mould of alluvial formation, which might serve as manure for lands in other parts of the world, and is in some places six feet deep. The overflowings of some of the rivers and the numerous springs by which the country is watered, give to the land a green and fresh appearance, even in the dry season. To this fertility of soil, and to the graduation of temperature—the natural consequence of an advantageous scale of altitudes —may be attributed the variety and abundance of the vegetable productions of Central America, which embrace nearly all those of Europe and the West Indies, besides some that are peculiar to the country. Of these the most valuable are indigo, cochineal, tobacco, cocoa, mahogany, logwood, vanilla, cotton, and sassafras, which are the great staples of the country, and the chief articles of exportation. Indian corn, sugar, and coffee, are also produced in considerable quantity, and a variety of dye woods, as also gums, spices, and balsams, especially the balsam of Tolu, so much esteemed.

Of dye woods, the following, next to logwood, are the

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most valuable: the St. Juan and the Poro, which yield a beautiful yellow, and particularly the *Annona reticulata*, the peculiarity of which is that its wood, though perfectly white, changes colour on being cut or slit, and turns to a clear brilliant red, that is easily extracted, and is quite durable.

The gums most in esteem are copal, arabic, quitini, guapinol, (an excellent perfume,) incense, chiracca, and the gum of the chesnut tree. An oily substance is also extracted from the fruit of this tree, from which candles are made, as fine as those of white wax, and burning with a clear, steady light, without giving out much carbon.

Besides the mahogany tree, there are others which are remarkable for their size and beauty, or for their peculiar fitness for cabinet work; as cedars of gigantic dimensions, the *Ceyba*, or silk-cotton tree, the *Palma real*, or wild cabbage tree, the wild tamarind and the cocoa-nut tree. Also the lignumvitæ, the oak, the quachepelin, a very strong wood suitable for stakes to build on, as not rotting in the ground, the quiebrahacha, which is also remarkable for its durability and hardness, and the *comenegro*, or iron tree, so highly esteemed in the East Indies and in other countries.

Of the vegetables of this country, one of the most useful is a small species of bean, perfectly black, which is very extensively cultivated, and constitutes the chief nourishment of the working classes. Another is the plantain, which thrives well there, and is consumed in great quantities.

The fruits deserving any notice, are the chirimoya, a species of annona, which is very luscious and refreshing, the quanávana, another species of annona, the aguacate, or alligator pear, (*Persica gratissima*,) the corozo, which is a cocoa-nut in miniature, being not larger than a hen's egg, the pine-apple, the sapote, (*cucurbita citrullus*,) the

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caymito, commonly called in English the star apple, and the well-known bannana. The fruits peculiar to higher latitudes are also produced there, but not in the same perfection.

The mineral productions of Central America are also deserving of consideration. The gold mines of Costa-rica, and the silver of Honduras, are rapidly increasing in their products. Those of Aguacate, in the former State, have produced great riches since their discovery. The extreme richness of this mine, and the circumstance of its being situated on the coast of the Caribbean sea, were the cause of this part of the country being called *Costa rica*, or rich coast. There are other mines in the province of Comayagua, in New Segovia, in Nicaragua, and in the State of St. Salvador; some of them so productive, that every one hundred pounds of ore extracted yield seventeen marks six ounces of silver, or nearly twelve per cent.* In other parts of the mountainous regions of Central America, there are strong indications of the existence of mines. The ore sometimes is found quite near the surface of the earth. A valuable piece of silver ore was shown me, while I was at Truxillo, by a man who said he had obtained it from the mountains in the neighbourhood of that place, just beneath the surface of the earth, and that by searching for ore in places that he was acquainted with, he could any day earn five or six dollars. It was by this kind of industry that he maintained himself.

The seas of Central America abound in pearls and tortoise shell.

In respect of the animals of the country, the most important are those which are not indigenous to the continent, but which have been introduced by the Spaniards, as cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and hogs. The horses are not of a very superior breed, but the mules are exceedingly

* A mark of silver is eight ounces.

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hardy and useful. The woods and mountains contain some wild animals, but none very fierce or powerful. The most remarkable are tigers and wolves. The former are rather a species of leopard, and seldom attack a man, but live on game, and sometimes come into the villages and seize on the dogs and cattle. They are hunted for the sake of their skins, which are very beautiful. The zorillo is a small fox, which emits an effluvia so powerful and offensive, that it stupifies, and has been known to cause the death of a dog that had killed it. The same effluvia leaves a blue dye on every thing it comes in contact with. The tapir, commonly called the mountain cow, is the largest of the quadrupeds in a wild state, but in appearance is something between a hog and elephant. The zahino and the striped boar are also found in Central America, and a great variety of monkeys. Dear and wild hogs are common in the woods. Of the latter, there is a species with an excrescence on its back, from which a fetid matter is constantly exuding. This excrescence the natives call the navel, and say it must be immediately cut out on the animal being killed, as it contaminates the flesh.

The otter and the manati are to be found in the rivers, which also abound with alligators. The latter are sometimes very large and dangerous. Concerning these animals, a curious circumstance was related to me, for the truth of which, however, I cannot vouch. The wound produced by the bite of the alligator very soon fills with worms, and becomes exceedingly difficult to cure. But if when a person is bitten, he immediately washes the wound in the water of the stream frequented by that animal, no worms appear, and a cure is easily effected.

Of snakes, lizards, and other reptiles, there is a great variety and abundance. The most dangerous are the rattlesnake, and another species called the Tamagazo; but particularly the latter, which is so venomous, that its bite oc-

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casions instant death. Happily, there exists an infallible antidote to the venom of these reptiles in a plant called *el Guaco*, the leaves or roots of which pounded and applied to the wound, or used internally by chewing them, and swallowing the juice, very rarely fail to effect a cure. This plant is also worn round the legs or ankles by persons in the woods, to prevent the bite of a snake. It is always to be found near places frequented by venomous animals. Its effect on them is believed to be narcotic and soothing—a sort of intoxication, which disarms them of their malignity. I was told by a merchant at Izabal, that having allowed the guaco to grow up in his garden, the place in a short time was infested by snakes; but that on rooting up the plant, and clearing his garden of it, these unwelcome visitors disappeared. It is believed that the guaco might prove an excellent remedy against the cholera, as also in cases of hydrophobia; but it does not appear that the experiment has yet been made. The Mica is another snake, the reputed peculiarity of which is that it does not bite, but lashes with its tail, which it uses like a whip. In doing this, the mica fixes its head in the ground, and exerts itself so effectually, as to flog an enemy to death. I do not vouch for the truth of this marvellous story. The Boa is also found in some parts of Central America. The Armadillo and the Iguana are common, and are said to be excellent eating. Scorpions and centipedes are also numerous, and the more troublesome, as they infest the dwellings of the inhabitants.

The birds of Central America are deservedly celebrated for their great variety, and the extraordinary beauty of their plumage. Among the most conspicuous, is the Quesal, or Trogon resplendens, which is to be found only in the wild and remote regions of Central America and the south of Mexico. Those frequenting the forests of Quesaltenango, from which they derive their name, are much the finest. This bird is of the shape and size of a

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pigeon. Its plumage is of a metallic golden green, except that of the wings, which is spotted with a brilliant red and black. The head is adorned with a soft silky crest of short barred feathers, of a beautiful green. But the distinguishing feature of this bird, and that which constitutes its peculiarity and beauty, is the plumage of its tail, which consists of three or four loose wavy feathers of a rich green, powdered with gold. These feathers are barred, and about three feet long. They used to be worn by the aborigines of America as ornaments for the head. In brilliancy of plumage, and in symmetry of form, this bird—even setting aside the grace and beauty of its pendent plumage—is unrivalled among the feathered tribe. When deprived of the ornament of its tail, the quesal seems sensible of the injury: it sickens and dies. Such is the importance it attaches to this part of its gorgeous dress, that the nest it makes is provided with two apertures, one for egress, the other for regress, in order to avoid the necessity of turning, by which the feathers of its tail might be broken or disordered. For the same reason it seldom makes a short or sudden turn. The Indians held it sacred, and used to say that the Creator, when he formed the world, assumed the form of a quesal.

The chorcha, a species of oreole, is remarkable for the curious construction of its nest, which is of the kind called pensile, from the circumstance of its being suspended in the air, by a mere thread, from the extremity of a lofty branch. In the construction of this nest, an architectural conception is displayed, the most ingenious, artificial, and complicate, that it is possible to imagine. It is a bird of small size, and its plumage is black and yellow. It is to be found also in the United States; and as a very correct account of it is given in Wilson's Ornithology, any description of it here would be superfluous.

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The Sinsonte may be styled the American nightingale. It has also some affinities with the mocking-bird of the United States. From the peculiar softness and clearness of its note, it ranks the first among the singing birds of Central America. Parrots, perroquets, and mackaws, abound in the woods. The gay plumage of the latter, in its contrast with the deep green foliage of the trees, has a beautiful effect.

Besides these birds, there are numerous others equally remarkable, which it would be tedious to enumerate; for in no part of the world is the ornithological department more rich than in this country.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

Population of Central America.—Trade.—Form of Government.—Political Events.—Insurrection of the Indians.—Account of Carrera.—Deputies sent to him.—Capture of Guatemala.—Distracted State of the Country.—Military Force of Central America.—Revenue.—Church Establishment.—Public Debt.—Principal Men.

THE population of Central America is estimated at one million nine hundred thousand souls, of all descriptions, besides the Mosquito Indians, who live in a state of independence. This population is divided into four grand castes, namely, Indians, whites, blacks, and ladinos—a mixture of the other three. The relative number of these classes is approximately as follows:

Indians, . . .	685,000,	
Whites, . . .	475,000,	Total, 1,900,000.
Ladinos,* . . .	740,000,	

The number of blacks is too inconsiderable to be taken into account. It may also be remarked, that the ladinos of this country cannot be assimilated to the West Indian mulattoes, as their complexions are much fairer, and many are scarcely distinguishable from the whites.

The Indians of Central America, with the exception of one or two small tribes, are domesticated, and subject to the Government of the country; many of them speak the Castilian, and are blended in their manners with the mass of the population. But, as I have heretofore had occasion to observe, they preserve in a great degree their

* Having neglected to ascertain why this class of people are denominated "ladinos," I may be allowed to conjecture that the name was suggested by the character of this people, illustrated by the word *ladino*, which, in Spanish, means shrewd, or cunning.

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aboriginal languages and customs. They even retain some vestiges of their ancient religious rites and superstitions, and it requires all the vigilance of the curates to prevent their falling back into idolatry. In Costarica there is a small tribe called the Valientes, who are allowed to retain their independence. They inhabit the woods and forests of that State, but are in constant intercourse with the rest of the population, and are peaceable and honest. The Mosquito Indians, before alluded to, are an ignorant indolent race, settled in the northern coast of Honduras, who in like manner disclaim the authority of the Government, but are, in some sort, under the controul of the English, to whom they are much attached. There are seven Indian languages in Central America, each of which has two or three dialects. The jealousies among the castes are balanced by the aversion of the Indians to the ladinos, while the constitution holds out equal rights and privileges to all. They do not, however, profess any very great affection for the whites, for whom they rather entertain a traditionary or hereditary feeling of dislike or fear, owing doubtless to the servitude and oppression to which they were subjected by the early settlers of the country.

The territory of Central America is capable of containing an infinitely greater population than that specified in the preceding statement. A large portion of it is unsettled, and in a state of nature. There are vast tracts in the interior, enjoying a fine climate and a fertile soil, where the most flattering prospects are held out to foreign emigrants, and where agricultural industry could not fail of reaping an ample compensation. Conscious of this, and of the advantages of recruiting its population from foreign countries, the Government has adopted the policy of encouraging emigration. But the attempts made towards effecting this object have been hitherto unsuccessful, owing no doubt to the constantly disturbed state of the country and the insecurity of property.

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The trade of Central America is carried on principally through the port of Izabal, where the goods are shipped to Balize, and thence conveyed in English vessels to Europe. Through the same channel are imported nearly all the foreign manufactures and other objects consumed in the country. The articles exported, besides those already enumerated, are hides, tallow, and bullion. Of the latter, a considerable portion goes out through Jamaica. The imports consist of English dry goods, cutlery, hardware, and almost every species of European manufacture; the productions of native artificers being merely some cotton stuffs of the coarsest kind, serges, straw hats, and mats, crockery, and a few articles of jewelry, none of which, except the last mentioned, are exported. The objects constituting the wealth of the country, are, as previously stated, indigo and cochineal, which are produced in great quantities and of excellent quality, and are exchanged for the manufactures of Europe.

The form of government in Central America is a federal republic, called the Confederation of Central America. This confederation comprises the five States of Costarica, Nicaragua, Honduras, St. Salvador, and Guatemala. The constitution, which is formed on the model of that of the United States, provides for a general Congress, in which the legislative power is vested, with local or state legislatures for the direction of internal concerns. The general Congress is composed of deputies elected in the proportion of one to every thirty thousand inhabitants, and half the members are re-elected every year. The Senate is a permanent chamber, and acts as a Council to the President; it consists of two members from every State; and one third of the Senators are re-elected every year. The executive power is vested in the President, who is elected, like the Vice-President, for the term of four years. The Secretaries of State are three; one for the foreign and home department, another for finance, and the third for war, and are appointed by the President. The

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supreme court of justice consists of six members, one third of whom are re-elected by the people every two years. The elections, however, are not made directly by the people, but by means of electoral colleges, as in France. The local or state governments consist of a Senate and House of Deputies, and an executive chief, who is Governor of the State.

The national coat of arms is a range of five volcanoes, washed by two oceans, with a rainbow above, and the cap of liberty beneath, surrounded by a glory. This is enclosed in a triangle encircled by the inscription, "Federacion de Centro America." The flag consists of three horizontal stripes, (blue, white, blue,) with the arms in the centre, except in merchant vessels, where they are substituted by the words, Dios, Union, Libertad. With these words also despatches and official letters are concluded.

The Independence of Central America was achieved on the first of July, 1823, when the preceding constitution was adopted. For a short period this territory formed part of the Mexican republic, having been subjected by the troops of Mexico under General Filisola. This union, which had been effected contrary to the general will of the people, was dissolved in consequence of the revolt of the State of St. Salvador, followed by that of the other States; and Guatemala once more asserted her independence. Shortly after, a conspiracy was formed by the officers of the army for overthrowing the Government, and a desperate struggle ensued between the rebel troops and the inhabitants of the capital. But the patriotism and courage of the latter finally prevailed, and tranquillity was restored to the republic. After an interval of a few years, however, public order was again disturbed, and the insurrection of the Indians, headed by Carrera and favoured by the enemies of the Government, kindled those flames of civil discord which are now consuming the country.

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A variety of causes combined to produce this revolutionary movement, the principal of which are believed to be the encroachments of the Government on the rights and property of the church, the concession of abusive privileges, the malversation of the public revenue, the extortions practised on the agricultural and labouring classes, and the political excesses of the two contending parties headed by Galvez and Barrundia.

The occurrence of the cholera, and the establishment of sanitary cordons, with their attendant vexations, at a moment when the excitements of the mal-contents was highest, precipitated the catastrophe. The ignorant Indians were made to believe by the enemies of public order, that the springs and sources of the land had been poisoned by the agents of the Government, or by the foreigners, and that the object in view was the extermination of their race.* At this critical juncture the standard of revolt is raised by Carrera, who appears in the field with a handful of men as desperate as himself.

This man, whose name is now in the mouth of every one in Central America, and whose acts have been productive of so much trouble in that country, is a half-Indian, and was a soldier in the Federal army, where he never rose higher than a corporal. On the disbanding of the troops, he was discharged; and being left to his own resources, he was fain to procure a precarious subsistence

* An English gentleman, having strolled into the country, was set upon while resting near the banks of a stream by some Indians of a neighbouring village, who, perceiving him to be a foreigner, took it for granted that he had been poisoning the water, and determined to put him to death. The Englishman expostulated, representing to them the folly of their suspicions, and offering to drink of the water they supposed to be poisoned. This was agreed to by the Indians; but not satisfied with a copious draught taken by their victim, they forced him to drink again and again, till they nearly killed him. Soon after, these Indians having been arrested in consequence, it was left to the English gentleman to designate the punishment that should be inflicted on them. It is pleasing to be able to say that he generously pardoned them.

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by dealing in hogs, which he bought in the country, and sold in the market of Guatemala. When the sanitary regulations were adopted, he was appointed to the charge of one of the stations, with the command of about a dozen men. With these few men, whom he seduced, and persuaded to follow him in his hazardous enterprise, he appeared in open rebellion, proclaiming a new order of things, and calling upon the inhabitants of the Indian villages he marched through to join his standard. This little force increased almost immediately to sixty men, and continuing to augment, enabled Carrera to attack and destroy, on several occasions, the scattered troops of the Government, whose arms and accoutrements he distributed among his followers. The views which Carrera professed to entertain could not be more flattering to the prejudices, nor better calculated to dazzle the minds, of the infatuated Indians. These views he declared to be, the reinstatement of the Archbishop, who had been expelled from Guatemala, the restitution of the Church property, the restoration of the Monkish orders, the revival of the old Spanish laws, the expulsion of foreigners, and the abolition of contributions.

In the mean time, the inactivity of the Executive, and the want of system and concert on the part of the military commanders, permitted the insurrection to progress to such a degree, that when measures were at length adopted for suppressing it, the strength of the Government proved inadequate to the task. The factious Indians did not hesitate to meet the Federal troops in the field, and in some engagements with them, came off with complete success. They now attacked and entered considerable towns, levied contributions, and threatened the capital. In this state of things a resolution was adopted, which, so far from being attended with the favourable result expected, only served to expose the weakness of the Government, and to encourage the insurrection. It was resolved to send a deputation to Carrera, to negotiate with him, and to induce him,

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by the most flattering concessions, to sheathe his sword, and to disband his followers.

This deputation was accordingly appointed, and sent in quest of Carrera, whom they found at a place called Mataquescuintla. The conference took place in the open air, and a Doctor Castilla, an ecclesiastic, one of the deputies, addressing the rebel chief, represented to him the enormity of the crime of rebellion, the distress and ruin he was bringing upon his country, and the folly of believing in the iniquitous act ascribed to the Government, of having poisoned the waters; and concluded by a hint, that his submission would not go unrequited. The reply of Carrera was, after disclaiming all views of private interest, that the spirit and practice of the Government was incompatible with religion; that consequently, such a government could not be good; and that he was only practising a lesson they had taught him, namely, the right of insurrection. This reasoning was easily refuted by the eloquent Doctor, who, occasionally, also addressed the rebel soldiers who surrounded him. Carrera now began to evince strong symptoms of impatience and uneasiness. He saw that his arguments were all demolished, that his men were listening to the speaker with attention and complacence, and that there was a possibility of their turning against him and deserting him. He suddenly imposed silence on the Doctor, and, in order to inflame the minds of his people, had recourse to a falsehood, asserting in the most vehement manner, that he himself had been offered by the Administration twenty dollars for every Indian he should poison. Thereupon, the deputies, seeing not only the inutility, but the danger of pursuing their object any further, gave up the discussion, and withdrew.

A few days after, Carrera, with three or four thousand Indians at his back, appeared before Guatemala, and as no effectual resistance could be opposed to him, he entered, and took possession of the city. The alarm and confusion of the inhabitants may easily be imagined. The

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scenes that followed were such as were to be expected in a city abandoned to the rapacity and cruelty of a barbarous horde. Houses were broke open and plundered; the worst of outrages were committed on private families; a number of persons were shot down in the streets, and the Vice-President, Salaza, was killed in his own house.* It is due to Carrera to say that these excesses were not committed by his directions, and that perhaps it was not in his power to prevent them. As soon as an opportunity was afforded, some of the authorities came to a parley with Carrera, and prayed him to state the terms on which he would consent to evacuate the city. The demands of the rebel chief were, all the money and all the arms that the Government could command. He was, however, at length satisfied with eleven thousand dollars, a certain number of muskets, and—strange as it must seem—the rank of Lieutenant-General, which was offered to, and accepted by, him. The latter concession seems to have been the most gratifying to this modern Massaniello, who, in his impatience to display his newly acquired honors, appropriated to himself, and put on, a uniform belonging to a General Prem. In compliance with the agreement made, he now collected his forces, and with a good sum of money, and his men well armed, withdrew from the city.

But from that day the star of Carrera ceased to shine with its usual brightness. Having attacked the town of Amatitan with a body of four hundred men, he was re-

* I will take the liberty of adverting here to the meritorious conduct of our late Consul in Guatemala, Charles Savage, Esq., on the occasion of the capture of that city by the insurgents. The foreign residents there, it seems, applied to him for protection against the outrages they had reason to apprehend. This appeal, though Mr. Savage could scarcely be supposed to possess the means of affording the protection desired, was effectually responded to; as, according to the statement of the foreigners themselves, Mr. Savage, by his activity and firmness, and by exposure to personal danger, actually succeeded in saving the property, and perhaps the lives, of some of the residents alluded to. A letter of thanks, signed by twelve persons, was, in consequence, addressed to him.

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pulsed with much loss by a company of sixty Federal soldiers. He was equally unsuccessful in another attack upon another town, called *Salamá*, where he lost several men, and was obliged to retreat in disorder. As the season advanced, he saw his ranks becoming daily more thin by the desertion of his followers, who left him in order to attend to the collection of their little corn crops, on which the subsistence of their families depended. In this state of things, a conspiracy was formed against him by one of his associates, called Monreal. This man, and a few others who had joined in the enterprise, suddenly fell upon Carrera at a moment when he was alone, secured his person, conducted him to a solitary place, and having tied him to a tree, were on the point of shooting him, when the timely arrival of Laureano, Carrera's brother, saved the victim from the doom that threatened him. The tables were now turned upon Monreal, who, before he could effect his escape, was seized, and shot at the foot of the same tree to which he had tied his chief.

In the mean time, General Morazan, the President, had taken the command of the army in person, and having organized and increased it, made so skilful a disposition of his troops, that whichever way the insurgents turned, they were met by an opposing force. Carrera now was fain to betake himself to the mountains, from which he descended occasionally, to scour the country and procure the means of subsistence. In these excursions his force was divided into small parties of from twenty to fifty men. His practice was to abstain from touching the persons or properties of the Indians, or of the poorer class of the whites, and to respect the curates. But the haciendas of the rich were attacked and plundered, the wealthy in small defenceless towns were subjected to heavy contributions, foreigners falling into their hands were cut off without mercy, and the unwary traveller was stopped on the road and stripped of every thing.

Such was still the posture of affairs at the time of my

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departure from the country. It is probable, however, that while this is being written, the active measures of General Morazan for putting down the insurrection have been successful, and that the career of the rebel hero has been brought to a close.

The distracted state of Central America, at the period of my visit there, was not owing merely to the revolt of Carrera, but to other causes—to the jealousies existing among the different States, and the dissensions of the political parties of the country, some of whom were for "centralizing" the Government and abolishing the State legislatures, and others for maintaining the existing constitution. The credit and resources of the Republic were nearly exhausted. The administration of justice was suspended; for as the old judicial system had been abolished without the substitution of a new one, the courts were left without any rule to guide them in their decisions.* In criminal cases, sentence was pronounced by a military commission. One or two of the States had separated from the Union; the Government had virtually ceased, or existed only in the person of General Morazan; confusion prevailed in every department; and a total dissolution of the political fabric seemed to be inevitable.† The last act of the Congress, before I left, was one for calling a general convention, or constituent assembly, to take into consideration the condition of the country, and decide on the measures to be adopted for saving it from ruin.

The force composing what is called the Federal army,

* Mr. Livingston's criminal code and the system of trial by jury, had been adopted by the Legislature, but proving incompatible with the habits and prejudices of the people, were suspended and finally abandoned.

† The following extract from one of the public papers of Guatemala may be regarded as a pretty correct description of the state of affairs at that period: "Entre nosotros la Republica està disuelta de hecho y de derecho; el Senado no existe; algun Estado està separado de la Union; las Rentas estan aniquiladas, paralizadas las fuentes de la riqueza publica, devastados los Estados, perdido el prestigio del Gobierno en el interior, sin credito nacional, relaciones, ni respetabilidad en el esterior."

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was three thousand men. There was no navy. Of the revenue collected, no regular returns were made, owing to the troubled state of the country and the difficulty of the communications. The amount, however, may be estimated at two millions of dollars; but of this sum scarcely two-thirds are received into the Treasury, such is the mismanagement or corruption prevailing in the fiscal departments of the Government.

The Church, in the State of Guatemala, is supported by the proceeds of a tax of half a dollar on every hundred acres. In the other States, it is supported by the payment of tithes. The curacies are badly provided. In many small villages, divine service is never performed, and the inhabitants are obliged to go several miles to hear mass. The curates, sometimes, have to travel fifteen or twenty miles to confess and assist the dying.

The amount of the public debt did not exceed £241,684 sterling, but, no doubt, has been latterly much augmented.

The principal men of the country are the following:—

General Morazan, the President;
Vigil, the Vice-President;
Ibana, acting Vice-President;
Galvez, late Governor of the State of Guatemala;
Barrundia, a Deputy;
Valenzuela, now Governor of Guatemala;
Alvarez, Secretary of State and of War;
Aycinena, a Senator;
Zebadua, ex-Secretary of State;
Rodriguez, a Senator;
Porras, Molina, } Deputies;
And Dr. Castillo, an ecclesiastical dignitary.

The distances from Guatemala to the principal ports or towns of the Republic, are the following:—

To St. Salvador, ... 90 leagues.
" Comayagua, the capital of Honduras, 161 "

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To Leon, id. of Nicaragua, ...		215	leagues.
" Cartago, id. of Costarica		397	"
" Izabal, ...		80	"
" Truxillo, ...		242	"
" Iztapa,	on the Pacific coast, .	31	"
" Realejo,		195	"
" St. Juan, in Nicaragua, near to where it was proposed to open the canal, .		245	"

A league is 21,000 Spanish feet, or about three English miles.

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CHAPTER XIX.

City of Guatemala.—The Plaza.—Public Buildings.—The Hermitage.—Account of the Old City.—Earthquakes and Volcanic Eruptions.—Cosiguina.—Character and Customs of the Natives.—Peculiarities of Language.—Procession of Corpus Christi.

THE cities of Central America are twenty-nine in number; but those entitled to any notice, are only the following: Guatemala, in the State of that name, with a population of about twenty-five thousand souls, Antigua, or old Guatemala, and Chiquimula; St. Salvador, in the State so called, which is now the Federal district, comprising a circle around the city twenty miles in diameter, and the residence of the Government; Santana and Sonsonate, in the same State; St. José, in Costarica; Leon and Granada, in Nicaragua; and Comayagua and Truxillo, in Honduras.

The city of Guatemala stands in the middle of a large and beautiful plain, surrounded by mountains. In the suburbs and environs there are numerous groves and gardens. The streets cross each other at right angles, and, being rectilinear, present at each extremity a charming prospect of the adjacent country. The houses consist of only one story, which rarely exceeds twenty feet in height, in order to their more easily resisting the shock of an earthquake.* They are all provided with inner courts and corridors. In the centre of these courts there is generally a fountain or some ornamental trees, or both;

* Although the houses in Guatemala are of a construction enabling them to resist an ordinary earthquake, the possibility of a shock so violent as to make it dangerous to remain within doors has not been overlooked. Thus, in some of the houses, may be seen standing in the centre of the court, a pavilion, as a place of refuge in the contingency just alluded to.

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and in many of the houses there are two courts and a garden. The space occupied by these houses is certainly very great, in proportion to the accommodations they afford, but they are delightful dwellings, and have a light, cheerful appearance, with this convenience, that every room is on the same floor. The doors—strange as it may seem—are provided, in some cases, with two knockers, one considerably higher than the other: the under one, for persons on foot; the upper, for those who are on horseback. The doors, however, are never shut, except in the night-time.

The plaza, or great square in the centre of the city, is provided on three sides with a colonnade, which affords passengers a shelter from the sun and rain. On the other side stands the cathedral—a splendid edifice, in the best style of modern architecture. It has three entrances in front, with a flight of steps. The interior is divided into three aisles, formed by two rows of arches, supported by lofty massive pillars. In the centre of the plaza there is a fine fountain; the area is used as a market-place. The best shops are situated in this part of the town, as also most of the public offices.

The public buildings of Guatemala deserving any notice are those of a religious character. The most conspicuous, next to the cathedral, is the convent of St. Francis; but this noble structure is now falling to ruins, having been much injured by an earthquake; all the church ornaments and pictures have been removed, and the place is now shut up and untenanted. The convent of la Recoleccion, where, since the extinction of the Monkish orders, a high school is kept, is another magnificent pile. It contains, among other works of art, a fine painting of Lazarus rising from the grave. The churches of St. Dominic, Santa Teresa, and la Merced, are also structures of great beauty and merit, and among the chief architectural ornaments of the city.

There is a chapel, or hermitage, called la Hermita,

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which is remarkable only for its antiquity, and for its charming and romantic site. It was erected there long before the capital was transferred to its present situation, and at a time when the space occupied by the city of Guatemala was a verdant waste. This chapel is in the suburbs, on a little hill, the sides and foot of which are covered with shrubs and wild flowers. It commands a wide and charming view of the city and country, and is a favourite place of resort in the afternoons.

There is a university in Guatemala, but the students are very few. It contains a library, which I visited. The books are principally old Spanish chronicles; Herrera's general history of America, and that of Torquemada, some of the ancient classics, among which was an Italian version of Virgil by Antonio Ambrogi—a fine edition,—some of the Spanish classics, two or three encyclopedias, and some dictionaries and vocabularies of Indian languages. There is also a mint; but the machinery necessary for coining being incomplete, it is not now in operation. The printing offices, I think, are only two. The newspapers are also two. There is no theatre, no reading-room, nor any hotel or coffee-house in the place.

Guatemala was originally built near the sea, twenty-five miles to the south of its present situation. The old city, called Antigua, is still populous, and contains ten or twelve thousand inhabitants. It is situated on the declivity of a mountain, the summit of which is crowned by the grand volcano. It was overwhelmed by an earthquake in 1751, but was rebuilt a few years after. In 1773 it was again destroyed by another earthquake, and several shocks were experienced, at intervals, from that period to 1775, when it was determined by the Government to remove the city to a more eligible site. The situation selected was that where new Guatemala now stands. The capital was, accordingly, transferred, and orders were issued for the removal of the population.

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But these orders were obeyed with so much reluctance, that coercive measures had to be adopted for enforcing them. The evil, however, was only partially remedied, for the present capital has also experienced several shocks. Indeed, almost the whole country is subject to earthquakes. A slight shock was felt at Sacapa while I was there. In 1822 a remarkable earthquake occurred near the volcano of Chirripó. The shocks commenced by an undulating motion from east to west, and then the motion was vertical and more violent. Many buildings in the town of St. José were cracked, and the portico of the church, and one of its towers, were thrown down. In the adjacent country, crevices of various dimensions appeared in the ground, from the bottom of which salt water and sand were thrown up. The following year the town of Cartago was also afflicted by an earthquake, accompanied by a dreadful eruption of the volcano of Trasù. For some miles round, and for the space of three days, the country was covered by a dense cloud of smoke, and great masses of fire were emitted, the appearance of which in the darkness of the night was terrific and appalling.

But the latest and most noted eruption and earthquake was that of the volcano of Cosiguina, which occurred in 1835. The following account of it is extracted from a report rendered by the commandant of La Union, a seaport in the bay of Conchagua, on the Pacific, and the nearest place of any consequence to the volcano:

"On the 20th instant, (January, 1835,) at 8 o'clock A. M., a dense cloud of a pyramidal figure was seen rising in the south-east, and a hollow rumbling noise was heard at the same time and in the same direction. This cloud continued to ascend till it covered the sun, when it separated to the North and South, accompanied with thunder and lightning. Finally, it spread over the whole firmament, and enveloped every thing in perfect dark-

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ness; so that the nearest objects became invisible. At 4 P. M. the earth began to quake, and an undulating motion was felt, which gradually increased as it continued. This was followed by a shower of phosphoric sand, which lasted till 8 in the evening, when also a heavy fine powder began to fall. Thunder and lightning continued through the night. On the 21st, there was another earthquake, and so violent and long, that many people who were walking in a penitential procession were thrown to the ground. To the terror thus occasioned, was added the howling of beasts, mixed with the cries of women and children, and the appearance of flocks of birds, and even of some wild animals, that came into the town, as if to seek an asylum among men. The darkness continued the whole of that day, and was so complete, as to make it necessary to use lanterns. It was partially dispelled on the following day, the 22d, although the sun was not yet visible.

"On the morning of the 23d, a tremendous report was heard, succeeded by others equally loud and appalling, which could only be compared to violent thunder-claps, or to the firing of the heaviest artillery; and this new occurrence was followed by increased showers of dust. From day-break of the 23d to 10 A. M. of said day, there was a partial return of light, and nothing could be more melancholy than the sight of the objects now discernible. The streets were covered with a coat of fine white dust, which, as it filled up the inequalities of the pavement, made them look perfectly smooth. People were so disfigured by it, that they had an unnatural, ghost-like appearance, and could not be recognised except by the sound of their voices. The trees and houses were also covered with it, and looked strange and disagreeable. Yet these unpleasant sights were infinitely preferable to the darkness in which we were again plunged after the said hour of 10, and which was as great as at any time

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during the two preceding days. The general distress, which had been somewhat assuaged, was thus renewed. The terror now was such, that more than half of the inhabitants determined to abandon the town; and, notwithstanding the danger attending this step, owing to the wild beasts and tigers that had been frightened out of the forests, and sought the habitations of men, they went forth on foot to seek refuge in the mountains, firmly persuaded that they should never return to their homes, for they expected nothing less than the total destruction of the town.

"On the morning of the 24th, about 3 o'clock, the moon and a few stars were visible, as if through a curtain. The subsequent day was clear, although the sun could not be seen. The dust continued to fall, which was now five or six inches deep on the ground. The 25th and 26th were marked with frequent, though not so violent, earthquakes. Many of the people are affected with catarrhs, head-aches, or sore throats, proceeding, doubtless, from the dust. The cattle have also suffered considerably; and numbers of birds may be seen lying dead in the roads, or floating on the sea."

In the month of February following, a Commission, appointed for the purpose, went to make observations on the volcano, but could not obtain a distinct view of the scene, owing to the dense smoke which still covered the plains. A forest, which appeared to be as old as the Creation, was found to have disappeared. Two islands had been formed in the sea, one eight hundred yards long, the other two hundred, covered with mineral earth and pumice stones. Some shoals were also discovered, in one of which a large tree was fixed upside down. The river Chiquito was completely choked up, and another had been formed, running in an opposite direction. Within the limits of the eruption were found the remains of all kinds of quadrupeds and birds.

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According to another statement, the Columbian galley Voladora, which left Acapulco on the 20th of January, for Realejo, experienced the darkness at twenty leagues from the shore, as well as such a copious shower of dust, that the crew were apprehensive of being suffocated, and were occupied during forty-eight hours in shovelling it from the vessel's deck.

I have been assured by Colonel Galindo, of Guatemala, an intelligent man, and by other persons, that the noise of the eruption was heard as far as Oajaca, three hundred and fifty miles in a direct line from Cosiguina; that at the port of Balize, in the bay of Honduras, the British authorities were doubtful whether the reports alluded to were the firing of a vessel in distress, or a naval action; and that in the interior of said settlement, the inhabitants universally believed that an enemy's force was attacking the town. It also appears to be beyond doubt, that at Kingston, in Jamaica, more than eight hundred miles from the volcano, the noise was heard, and supposed, as at Balize, to be signals from some vessel in distress, till the ashes that reached even there, showed it to be a volcanic eruption. It is even asserted the said sounds were heard in Santa Martha, in New Granada, and in Santa Fé de Bogotà.

Before concluding this chapter, a few remarks on the character and customs of the natives of Central America may not be uninteresting. It is only in the city of Guatemala, and in one or two of the larger towns, that civilization and the arts have made any considerable progress. In the rest of the republic—in the country and in the villages —the simple and primitive mode of life of the inhabitants differs only in a slight degree from that of the aboriginal Indians, whose condition and habits have been already noticed. The manners and dress of the citizens of Guatemala are essentially the same as those of the corresponding classes in the mother country. The ladies, as in Spain, wear the mantilla and veil when they go to church,

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and appear without any covering on their heads when walking out or on a visit. They are fond of adorning their hair with flowers, and with high tortoise-shell combs, some of which are very costly and beautifully wrought. Caps are never worn; nay, they are so much disliked, that even the elderly ladies prefer an exposure of their grey locks to wearing them. If they go out in the evening, the head is protected by a shawl or handkerchief; when travelling, or on horseback, they wear a hat surmounted by a profusion of feathers. The pride and luxury of a Guatemala lady is a richly embroidered veil, a costly fan, and a valuable set of jewels. Their passion for the latter is remarkable, as also for finery of every kind. They are generally well formed and graceful, and very proud of a pretty foot. A compliment to this part of a lady's person is the surest mode of winning her smiles.

On the part of the man, their taste for dress is chiefly exhibited when they are equipt for travelling. At such times, their swords, their spurs of massive silver, their poniards with sheaths of the same metal, the trappings of their horses elaborately embroidered with silk, and their other ornaments, imply an expense of not less than a thousand dollars.

Of both sexes it may be said with justice, that they are amiable, courteous, and attentive to strangers. They are of mild disposition, and have good natural talents, an aptitude for learning, and a lively imagination. Yet in education they are exceedingly deficient. Indeed, the means of acquiring it are scarcely within their reach, there being in the city but one establishment for the instruction of youth, besides the University. Thus, learning and literature with them are at the lowest ebb. Hospitality is one of their virtues, gambling one of their faults. They are also somewhat addicted to cock-fighting and bull feasts. They have a peculiar, but not a disagreeable, mode of speaking, and soft mellifluous voices, with a whining ac-

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cent not unlike that of the natives of Andalusia in Spain. In common conversation, they use a number of words that are foreign to the Castilian language, and are mostly derived from the Indian. Thus they use the word :—

Mecate, for *soga*, a rope ;
Chilillo, " *latigo*, a whip ;
Galapo, " *silla de montar*, a saddle ;
Caycos, " *alpargattas*, sandals ;
Milpa, " *plantio de maiz*, a corn-field ;

and a number of other words which have escaped my memory. Once, on asking for a wash-bason, I used the four names given to that article in Spanish without being understood, but on saying *ponchera*, a word suggested to me by a native, my wants were attended to. Another of their peculiarities in language, is that they often speak in the third person plural, and use the pronoun *vos* instead of *ustèd*, as *que decis vos?* (what do you say?) for *que dice ustèd?* This is the old Castilian mode of speaking, which has long since been abandoned in Spain, though it is infinitely preferable to the present mode, as being much more graceful. Their pronunciation of the *c* and *z* is also different from that of the Spaniards of Europe. These letters, the sound of which ought to be nearly like *th*, they pronounce like *s*, and consequently make no difference, in the pronunciation of *casa*, a house, and *caza*, the chase.

Their amusements consist chiefly in dancing and riding on horseback, of both which they are very fond. For walking, there are many pleasant places in the suburbs and environs of the city, especially a little Indian village, called Jocotenango, which is ingrafted, as it were, on the city, and forms a curious contrast with it. There are no carriages of any kind in Guatemala. The only vehicles I saw there, were two coaches that were not in use, either of which had wood enough in it to make three modern carriages, and was heavy enough to require six stout mules to draw it. Almost every house is open to visitors.

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In many of them a small party meet every evening, regularly and without ceremony, and pass the time in social intercourse. Formal parties are not frequent. Yet I was at one, where all the refinements of polished life seemed to be perfectly understood, and where I was agreeably surprised by the display of a tea-table, with all its accessories in the best taste. When a stranger is once told that "the house is at his disposal," he may consider himself an habitué, and admitted to the freedom of the house.

They have a great partiality for religious ceremonies and processions. That of Corpus Christi, which I witnessed during my stay there, is the grandest and the most admired. The procession was headed by a body of cavalry, composed of citizens, who were well mounted and dressed. Then came a number of other citizens on foot, with lighted tapers in their hands. These were followed by the authorities and the clergy; and then came the prelate, who represented the bishop, arrayed in his pontifical robes, and carrying the chalice containing the host. He walked under a canopy of silk, embroidered and fringed with gold, which was supported by four men of rank, arrayed in full uniform. The ground before him was strewed with leaves and flowers. Every head was uncovered, and every knee bent, as he passed; but this was in devotion to the host which he bore in the chalice. The prelate was followed by a coach and six horses. This was an old-fashioned state carriage, of richly carved wood, and gilt, with high massive wheels, heavy leather springs, and glass windows on each side and in front. The horses were gorgeously, though clumsily, caparisoned. Three of them were mounted by youths as postilions, and each horse was attended by a groom on foot. A guard of infantry and a military band brought up the rear; and then came the rabble—men, women, and children, of all colours. The streets along which the procession passed were covered with awnings; the houses were

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adorned with hangings of silk or velvet of various colours, and the windows crowded with spectators. Four altars were erected at intervals, which were illuminated with wax candles, and glittered with mirrors, artificial flowers, and a variety of ornaments of gold, and silver, and cut glass. It was altogether a most picturesque and interesting scene, in which the blending of religious and military pomp, the diversity of costumes, and the variety of novel objects that met the eye, could not fail of exciting the curiosity, and arresting the attention, of a spectator.

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CHAPTER XX.

General Morazan.—Preparations for Returning.—A New Travelling Companion.—Departure from Guatemala.—View of the City from a Distance.—Unexpected Luxuries.—The Commander of the Escort.

Soon after my arrival at Guatemala, I went with the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States to pay a visit to General Morazan, the President, who was not then in the city, but at his head-quarters at Villanueva, a little town about ten miles distant. On arriving there, we rode up to a house where a military guard was stationed, and which proved to be the dwelling of the General. There was a spacious yard in front, and a sentinel at the gate. We were admitted without difficulty, and, on inquiring for the President, were shown into a hall by one of the adjutants, who desired us to wait there till he announced our visit. This hall, the door of which was also guarded by a sentinel, had all the appearance of a guard-house. There was no other furniture in it but a large long table and a couple of wooden benches. It was full of officers of different ranks, who were there on duty, or waiting for orders. Their ranks could be distinguished by their epaulettes; but in their dress there was a total absence of uniformity; some wearing cocked hats with feathers, others round hats with a broad gold band round the crowns, some in blue regimentals, some in red, and many with no other uniform than a jacket with military buttons. In one thing only was there any appearance of regularity—in the long unwieldy swords and ponderous spurs with which they were all provided. In the yard were several horses, saddled and ready for service, and a

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number of soldiers, some loitering about, some furbishing their arms, and others gambling.

It was not long before we were admitted into the presence of the General, who received us with great courtesy. He was dressed in plain clothes, and seemed to be about forty years of age, small of stature, and rather of a dark complexion. In his manner and conversation there was some appearance of constraint or reserve; yet he had a fine expression of countenance, and eyes beaming with intelligence. On taking leave of him, he told me that the military commandant at Guatemala would be directed to furnish me, on my departure, another escort to accompany me in my return to the coast.

His own talents, together with a combination of fortunate circumstances, have raised General Morazan to the distinguished station he now occupies. In early life, he was a clerk in a merchant's store. Subsequently he entered the army, and soon after acquired some property by a matrimonial alliance. He was rapidly promoted, and thus placed in circumstances which enabled him to take an active part in politics. Having joined what was then called the popular party, the activity he displayed, and the influence he exercised, very soon caused him to be regarded as the leader of it. His talents, both as a soldier and a politician, soon gained for his party the ascendant; and from one success to another, he finally arrived at the Presidency. On reaching this point, he divested himself of all party feelings and political predilections. He also did not hesitate to make a temporary resignation of his civil authority, in order to direct in person the operations of the army. This policy, so far from diminishing, has rather increased his power and credit; for he is now sought and courted by men of all opinions. He is regarded by them as their anchor of hope, or as the pilot who is to guide the ship of state in safety through the storms that assail it.

The 2d of July was the day fixed for my departure.

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The escort promised me was furnished, and the officer commanding it made his appearance with his men at the appointed time. They were all foot soldiers, and twenty-five in number. I had declined the offer of some cavalry, having found them by experience more troublesome than useful. A young gentleman of Guatemala, a brother of the Marquis of A * * *—the only titled family in the country—having occasion to make a journey to the coast, had expressed his desire of accompanying me; and this being agreed to and settled, I called for him at an early hour on the day of departure. I found him busy in making his preparations; some of his servants saddling mules and loading baggage, and others setting out a table for breakfast. ' Several of his friends had come to accompany him for a few miles, whose horses were pawing up the ground and champing their bits in the court-yard. It was some time before we were ready to start. At length we mounted. Don Ignacio—for such was the baptismal name of my new travelling companion—bestrode a superb mule, full fifteen hands high, and in the style and fashion of his equipments exhibited a perfect model of a Central American dandy, when he is about to undertake a journey. He was armed from head to foot: his armas de agua, his rodilleras, and his cloak, were all in the best taste and of the best materials. He was attended by a servant well mounted, and by a muleteer on foot, and had altogether five mules; two for himself and servant, one to carry his baggage, another for his bedding and provisions, and a third as a sumpter mule.

We sallied forth to the number of ten or twelve persons, and attracted no little notice as we clattered over the pavement. The cavalcade proceeded at such a brisk pace, that I had some difficulty in keeping up with it; and as the mule I had under me was evidently unaccustomed to such rapid movements, and unwilling to adopt new habits, my spurs were in constant requisition. At length, after a ride of three or four miles, we overtook the

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escort and the baggage mules, which had been sent on before, and the friends of Don Ignacio took their leave. Half an hour at least was consumed in the performance of this ceremony. There was such a shaking of hands, such a repetition of the words *adios* and *buen viaje*, and such interest expressed about the safety and welfare of my new friend, that one would have thought he was going to the end of the world, and might never be seen again. I was a mere spectator in the scene, being completely eclipsed by Don Ignacio, whose friends barely bestowed on me a farewell nod, as they turned their horses and galloped back to the city.

We now proceeded at a more gentle pace. The route we pursued was not the one usually taken by travellers going to Izabal, nor that by which I had arrived at Guatemala. It was a road leading through another part of the country, and which had been recommended to me as being somewhat shorter, and as affording me an opportunity of performing the latter part of my journey by water. It was also considered by Don Ignacio as the preferable route. The only objection to it was that the country, in that direction, was but thinly settled, and there were fewer villages. This difficulty I submitted to the consideration of my companion before starting, but his reply was, "No importa, there is no want of haciendas on the way." But are you, I rejoined, acquainted with the proprietors of them? "No importa," said he again, "we shall be well received;" and it was definitively settled that we should proceed by the route alluded to.

We soon left behind us the plains of Guatemala, and came to a hilly broken country, where we continued to ascend and descend till we came to the river Chinauta. After following the course of this river for some time, and crossing it in several places, we commenced ascending a series of heights, the last of which fully compensated the fatigue we had undergone in reaching it, by the charming prospect it afforded. An extensive tract was spread

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before us of hill and valley, of plain and woodland, where a village church might be distinguished, at intervals, towering over a cluster of huts, or a hacienda embosomed in a grove of palm trees, or a stream meandering through a meadow, and glistening beneath the sun-ray. Behind us, the city of Guatemala was distinctly visible, with its surrounding groves and gardens, and its lofty public buildings. In front, the prospect terminated in a range of distant mountains, rising over each other till they were scarcely visible in the horizon. Descending these heights, we passed through a little village, without stopping, and in about two hours after came to an estate called el Carrizal, where we halted for the night. We had travelled six leagues; a distance that was considered sufficient for the first day, especially as there was no certainty of finding a better resting-place beyond, or a shelter from the rain, in case of our being overtaken by a shower.

The house was taken possession of in the same unceremonious way that I had observed on other occasions; and sentinels were stationed in military style. The servant of Don Ignacio, and a soldier whom I had been permitted to select from the escort, as an *asistente*, or attendant, made our arrangements for the night. My hard and homely bed was soon prepared for me; but the couch of Don Ignacio was a different affair. He had brought with him a neat little field-bed, which could be put together or taken to pieces in a few minutes. It was curiously complete and elegant in its furniture and appurtenances, and was provided with a mosquito net of the finest texture. Nor was this the only cause of wonderment afforded me by my luxurious fellow-traveller. He had also brought with him a sort of portable cupboard, consisting of two good sized leather boxes, connected by straps, so as to hang one on each side of the mule. This article, called in Spanish *almofreces*, was well stored, not only with a variety of provisions, but with glasses, knives and forks, plates, and even a frying-

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pan and a gridiron! With such conveniences at our command, there was a prospect before us of a pleasant journey, and of an exemption from the privations to which travellers are usually subjected in that wild and unsettled country.

In our evening meal, we were accompanied by our host, the proprietor of the estate, and by the officer commanding the escort. The latter was quite a young man, very unlike a Spanish American, having blue eyes, light hair, and a fair complexion. His rank was that of brevet captain. He had fought in the battle of Amatitan, and been promoted in consequence. He was poorly attired, and still worse mounted, and was without a sword—the last thing that an officer should part with. There was a rakish reckless air about him, which, taken in connexion with his want of a sword, led us to suspect that he was somewhat of a gambler; but there was also a refinement in his manner and conversation, that threw a gloss over his faults—whatever they might be—and induced one to look upon them with indulgence.

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CHAPTER XXI.

"Rio Grande."—Novel Contrivance for passing a River.—A Military Card Party.—The Warm Springs.—Valley of Salamá.—Detention at a River.—Arrival at Salamá.—Don Basilio.—A Sketch of the Town.—Carrera's Attack on it.—St. Geronimo.—Remarks on Central America.

EARLY the next morning we resumed our march; but had not gone far, when our progress, in a direct line, was impeded by a deep trench, or ditch, which compelled us to make a circuit of more than a league before we could regain the road. We now proceeded through a wild and mountainous country, traversing woods, and crossing streams and ravines, without seeing a house, a village, or even a human being. At one o'clock, we came to a large river called Rio Grande. The banks were high and precipitous, the stream rapid, and apparently very deep, and I was considering how this river was to be passed—there being no bridge—when my attention was attracted by two stout cables stretched from bank to bank, about twenty feet above the water. This, I was told, was the bridge by which we were to pass. These cables lay parallel to each other, and about fifteen inches apart. Between them, and supported by them, was a double block of a corresponding width, from which was suspended a strong leather strap, like a sling. To this strap, or sling, we had to trust our lives. We took our seats in it successively, and on a signal being given, a line attached to the block was hauled upon from the opposite side of the river, when the block, with its burden, glided over the cables, till it reached the landing-place on that side. The soldiers indulged in many a jest, and fired off their jokes upon each other as they were hauled over the river. To me, the apparatus ap-

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peared a most rude and dangerous contrivance; and I could not but feel some uneasiness when I found myself suspended in the air by a mere strap, with a rushing stream beneath me, where, should I fall, I might either be drowned, or dashed to pieces among rocks. The baggage, saddles, and other articles, were sent over in the same way. The mules were driven into the stream, and made to swim across; but for this purpose they were led to a place considerably above the point where they were to come out on the other side; the stream being so strong, that they could not possibly have crossed it in a direct line. The shouts of the muleteers, as they forced the mules into the river, and of the men stationed on the other side to prevent their passing the landing-place, made the adjacent woods ring again; the poor animals, in the mean time, snorting and splashing, as they struggled through the water. One of the mules was near being lost, and two were severely hurt: the rest succeeded in passing without accident.

Two hours were consumed in this tedious and perilous operation; and as two more would have been necessary to put things in a condition for continuing our journey, it was determined to suspend our march till the following day.

We now began to consider how, and where, we were to pass the night. We could see nothing but a miserable hut, inhabited by the man charged with the care of the ferry. This man, however, undertook to provide us a shelter, and conducted us to a small ruinous house, which was public property, situated on the banks of the river, about a hundred yards below the landing-place. There we found a single room, formed by the four walls, a table, and two or three chairs; and there we took up our quarters, leaving the escort and the arrieros to provide for themselves as well as they could.

The reckless and improvident spirit exhibited by the former was remarkable. They had received their rations in money; but instead of procuring themselves food

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therewith, which they might have done by applying at the ferryman's hut, they sat down, with a pack of cards, to win each other's money. They had lit a fire, not to warm them, but to afford them light, (for now the sun had set, and darkness was coming on apace,) and had spread a blanket, round which they sat, or crouched, watching with intense interest the turning of a card. The lurid glare of the fire, as it fell on them, brought out in full relief their strongly marked and manly features. They looked like so many banditti making a division of booty.

Behind them stood the officer, wistfully looking on, and regretting, perhaps, his inability to join the party without derogating from his rank. Meanwhile, these men, who, after a fatiguing march, might be supposed to entertain no other wish than that of some food and rest, were so absorbed by their passion for play as to neglect the wants of nature. Some of them lay down that night without a supper, and others, perhaps, rose the next morning to resume their march without a breakfast.

Leaving the banks of the Rio Grande, we penetrated into a wilderness of woods and mountains, where nature was exhibited in her wildest and most primitive forms, and where the silence and solitude of the scenes were seldom disturbed by the presence of man. As we proceeded, we came to a hollow, surrounded by rocks and thickets. This place is called *aguas calientes*, on account of hot springs that gush out from the earth or from crevices in the rocks. The ground in the immediate vicinity of these springs was moist, and covered with steam, and so warm, that the mules, when they came to the spot, started and turned away. The warm water, as it streamed from the springs, collected, here and there, in little pools or basins, formed delightful natural baths of different temperatures, according to their distance from the springs. In one place the water was

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so warm, that I could bear my hand in it only a few seconds.

After emerging from a dense wood, we came to an abrupt rugged mountain, without a tree, and composed of tale. The ascent, in some parts, was so steep, that our steeds could hardly keep their footing, and were in danger of rolling down. One of them, from fear or fatigue, made a full stop, and refused to move another step, notwithstanding the blows and abuse lavished on it by the arrieros. This difficulty was got over by unloading the mule, and carrying its burden by hand to the summit, in doing which the arrieros were assisted by the soldiers.

In our descent on the other side, we had a distant view of the valley of Salamá. It was a vast and highly cultivated tract, in the centre of which the town of Salamá could just be distinguished, with a number of haciendas and farm-houses round it, and a river (the name of which I have forgotten) flowing through the whole extent of the valley. About 12 o'clock we came to an estate, called *los Llanos*, where we took a short repast, and started again, without loss of time, in the hope of reaching the town of Salamá before night. As we entered the valley, however, we encountered a heavy shower. Our cloaks and chamarras were of little service, for the rain poured down so fast and abundantly, that in a few minutes it penetrated to the skin. This would have been a trifling hardship in a more northern latitude; but in the warm climates, under the tropics, where the pores are almost always kept open by a slight perspiration, it was a serious inconvenience, as a thorough wetting is generally followed by a fever. The best mode of preventing this effect, is to change clothes as soon as possible; but this it was not in our power to do until after the lapse of several hours.

Pursuing our route, we came to the river, which ran between us and the town; and here an insuperable barrier was presented to our progress. The river, which in

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ordinary circumstances is easily forded, had swelled with the sudden rain, was thick with mud, and roared and rushed by impetuously, bearing along broken branches and trunks of trees. The boldest of the party was unwilling to attempt the ford. In this dilemma, and with the rain still pouring on us, we looked round anxiously for a shelter. Happily, a little hut was descried at no great distance, and we all hastened thither to take refuge under its roof. There was only an old woman in the hut; we entered it without asking leave, and huddled in, to the number of at least thirty persons in a space of not more than twelve feet square. The mules and baggage were left outside to bear the pelting of the storm.

After stopping in the hut about two hours, one of the arrieros was sent to ascertain whether the river had subsided sufficiently to enable us to ford it. His report was favourable, and we sallied forth, mounted our steeds, and came a second time to the banks of the river. The stream was still copious and powerful; and no one seemed willing to be the first to encounter it. Our officer, at length, pushed into the water, and succeeded, though not without some difficulty and danger, in gaining the opposite bank. The rest of us, seeing that the sorry nag he mounted had struggled through successfully, did not hesitate to follow, and all of us passed without accident; some of those on foot holding on by the tails of the mules.

On arriving at Salamá, we stopped before the house of a certain Don Basilio, for whom we had brought a letter of introduction from Guatemala. This letter he was bound to consider in the light of a bill of exchange for food and lodging to be furnished at sight; and drafts of this description must not be dishonoured. Don Basilio received us with much cordiality; but there was an appearance of embarrassment in his manner, and ever and anon he cast an inquiring look at the numerous party which had collected before his door. At length a thought seemed to strike him, and he said, that if we preferred an entire house to

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ourselves, he could place one at our disposal that was unoccupied. "It is true," said he, "that the house is unfurnished; but I will supply you with such things as may be indispensable to your accommodation for the night." The proposal was accepted and generally approved, to the visible satisfaction of our host, who was thus rid of the trouble and confusion we were likely to cause him.

The house assigned us was large and commodious, with a piazza in front, a court-yard, and a spacious stable. Don Basilio sent us a table, three chairs, two mattresses, and a few other articles, with which we expressed ourselves quite satisfied, and assured him that, for the rest, we could take care of ourselves. The hall of the house was assigned to the soldiers, who, after partaking of a treat that we gave them in consideration of the fatigues of that day's march, stretched themselves on the bare tiles, and slept like children. Don Ignacio, the officer, and myself, established our quarters in another apartment, and the arrieros and mules took possession of the stables. There was no want of provisions in the town; and having the portable cupboard to resort to, and two diligent attendants to wait on us, we fared unusually well, and passed a comfortable night.

The next day a dark and cloudy sky threatened a day of rain. Presently a few light showers, and the sound of distant thunder, satisfied us of the little chance there was of resuming our journey that day without suffering the inconvenience of another wetting. About 2 o'clock—the usual hour, as I have before observed—it began to pour, and all idea of quitting Salamá till the next morning, was abandoned.

In the mean time I availed myself of a short interval of clear weather to take a view of the town, which, I was informed, was the head of a Department, or province, and contained a population of four or five thousand inhabitants. It was a large and apparently a flourishing place, with some good streets, and a plaza, in which were situ-

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ated, as in all Spanish American towns, the town-hall and the church. There were also a number of little shops round the plaza, and a fountain in the centre of it. Many of the streets were barricaded, and the barricades furnished with loop-holes to fire through. This was a means of defence which had been adopted on the occasion of a recent attack on the place by Carrera, who, as I have already stated, was repulsed and defeated there with considerable loss. Exasperated by his ill success in this expedition, the rebel chief, it seems, wreaked his vengeance on the neighbouring estates and farms, especially on one called the *hacienda de St. Geronimo*. This is the largest and most valuable estate in the country. It was formerly the property of the friars of the order of St. Jerome, who used to derive from it a revenue of forty thousand dollars, but on the extinction of the religious orders, was claimed by the Government as public property, and sold. The purchaser was an English gentleman, who paid for it two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in paper money, which had cost him only twenty-five thousand dollars in specie. The estate, being English property, was singled out by Carrera, and given up to the rapacity of his factious band, who fell upon it like a swarm of locusts, and after plundering it, burnt or destroyed what they were unable to carry off. The dependents of the estate, who were mostly Englishmen, took to flight, and thought themselves fortunate in escaping with their lives.

Such were, only a few months since, the evils with which the inhabitants of Central America were afflicted, and such the distracted state of that unfortunate country, which, blessed as it is with a delicious climate and a fertile soil, and rich in its mineral and vegetable productions, only wants a good government and good laws to make it the envy of the world.

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CHAPTER XXII.

Departure from Salamá.—Adventure in passing the River.—View of the Town and Valley.—The Indian Hamlet.—The Surly Indian.—Incidents of a Night.

After a detention of one day in Salamá, we proceeded on our journey, and on reaching the extremity of the valley, found ourselves upon the bank of the river, which, from the winding course it pursues, again crossed our path. Over this part of the stream there was a bridge; but no notice was taken of it by the arrieros, who drove their mules across the water, and were followed by Don Ignacio and the officer. I determined, however, to follow the example of the soldiers, who took the bridge, which, though unprovided with a railing, appeared to me perfectly safe, and sufficiently broad to be passed on horseback.

I had reached about the middle of the bridge, when my friends called out to me from the other side of the river not to attempt to proceed, but to turn back and take the ford. I now began to see the folly I had committed, and the danger of my situation. The planks composing the floor of the bridge, at the point where I had arrived, were quite loose, and so far apart, that my mule might easily have put her foot through the space between them. The poor animal, from an instinctive perception of danger, began to blow and tremble; and pointing her ears, would put her head down, and gaze at the water, that could be seen through the openings in the planks, rushing along twenty feet beneath. At length she made a full stop. I urged her forward, but she refused to move, and on my

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trying a second time, she turned her head first on one side, and then on the other, as if she contemplated taking a leap.

Apprehensive of this, I hastened to dismount, and taking the bridle in my hand, tried to lead her over; but she had resolved not to advance another step. I would fain have embraced the alternative of retracing my steps; but this was an undertaking even more hazardous than that of proceeding. The bridge was scarcely five feet broad, and, as before stated, had no railing on its sides. Thus, the space afforded for turning the mule was just equal to the distance between the fore and the hinder feet of the animal. The risk of her falling over, either backwards or forwards, was imminent. But the attempt must of necessity be made. Accordingly, holding the bridle loosely in my hand, so as in case of a mishap to avoid being entangled by it, and dragged into the water, I drew the mule gently round, and, to my surprise and satisfaction, saw her perform this evolution with complete success, though, in the act of it, her feet before and behind came at the same time within an inch or two of the edge of the bridge.

Having forded the river, and joined the party, I was rallied on my adventure, and made a subject of merriment for the rest of the day.

Leaving the valley, we now commenced ascending a series of rocky heights, from which a fine view was afforded occasionally of the plains below the town of Salamá, the river, and the hacienda of St. Geronimo, which could be seen in the distance whitening through the trees. The country grew more wild and rugged as we advanced, until it became a very labyrinth of woods, and rocks, and precipices. Further on, in passing through a forest, I was struck with the size and beauty of some of the trees, on the branches of which might be seen a variety of parasitical plants, that grew without any other nourishment than the little moisture they derived from the bark to which

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they adhered. My attention was also attracted by a number of other curious and beautiful plants and wild flowers, well deserving the notice of a florist or a botanist, that bloomed there unseen and unadmired.

We next proceeded along the channel of a mountain torrent, which, though it contained but little water, was so uneven and full of loose stones, that our progress through it was painfully slow and difficult.

Emerging from this torrent, we came in view of a little plain, hedged in by rocks and thickets, and situated at the foot of a mountain. In the centre was a cluster of huts, surrounded by little plantations of maize and fruit trees. The place was a rancheria, called *el Patal*, and had altogether a most rural and picturesque appearance. The huts were only six or eight, and were inhabited by Indians.

It being now 3 o'clock—the hour at which, in that season of the year, it usually rains—and there being no probability of our finding a shelter further on for a considerable distance, it was determined to make the rancheria our resting-place for the night. I was loth to disturb the quiet of this little fairy land—this Eden in miniature—but there was no help for it, and we proceeded to take possession of the place. The best of the huts, which might more properly be called a large shed, (it being entirely open on one side,) was occupied by the officer and the escort; another was selected by Don Ignacio for himself and his servant. The former was so crowded by the soldiers, and the latter so completely destitute of any thing like comfort, that I resolved on seeking my own accommodations elsewhere.

Casting my eye around, I fixed upon a hut rather more neat and respectable in appearance than the others, and rode towards it. This hut was hemmed in by a *milpa*, or corn plantation, and by a little kitchen-garden; and I saw no means of approaching it without injuring the premises. An old Indian, with a young man, now made

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his appearance, whom I saluted, and addressed in the most civil manner, asking him whether that was his house, and whether he would permit me to pass the night there. The old man shrugged his shoulders, and did not, or pretended not, to understand. I repeated the question, and his answer was, *managh, managh*, which—as I afterwards learnt—means, I have none, or there is none; the poor man believing, no doubt, that I was asking him for something to eat. I then desired him, partly by signs, to show me the way to the house; but his answer was, with something like petulance in the manner of giving it, "*no hay camino*," (there is no road.)

I now determined I would go into that hut "whether or not." Accordingly, I struck my spurs into my mule, and rode through the milpa to the door of the hut, where I tied my mule, and walked in; the old and the young Indian following me, and muttering in their native language unintelligible things. On entering the hut, I found a young woman occupied making tortillas. I sat down opposite to her, and addressed to her a few words, but to no purpose: she looked at me for a moment with an air of surprise, and then continued her work. She evidently did not understand a word of Spanish. Two little dirty naked children were sprawling at her feet; and it immediately struck me that she might be their mother. With this impression, I took one of them up, placed it on my knee, and wiping its little mouth, gave it a kiss. This act did not escape the attention of the mother—for such she proved to be—her countenance suddenly brightened up, and her full dark eyes beamed with an expression of pleasure. Pursuing my advantage, I made out to ask her whether that was her child. She seemed to understand me, and answered, *ha, ha, guahenni*—which means, yes, yes, my child. I then pointed to the other child, and asked if that, too, was her guahenni. She answered with a nod and a smile; and thereupon, I took up that one also, and caressed it as I had done the first.

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The old Indian, who was the father of this young woman, and of the youth by whom he was accompanied, had stood all this time looking on in silence. The sternness of his countenance had now in a measure disappeared; and as he seemed more favourably disposed towards me, I seized that opportunity of gaining his good will by paying him a little compliment. Taking up a calabash, that happened to be near me, I poured into it a small quantity of French brandy from a little flask—once the property of my former travelling companion, who transferred it to me—and handed the beverage to the old man, with a request that he would drink it. He took the calabash, but hesitated a moment, and looked first towards his daughter, and then to his son, as if to consult them before taking a draught that peradventure might be poisoned. At length he took courage, and tossed off the brandy; then smacked his lips, and cried, "bueno!" I then poured out into the same calabash a few drops, which I drank myself. This seemed to gratify the old man excessively; I had removed all suspicions of the drink being poisoned; I had not scrupled to drink out of the same cup with him; in short, I had fairly subjugated him by an act of condescension.

Finding myself now on the best terms with the whole family, I put a few reals into the hands of the old Indian, and desired him to buy me a fowl, some eggs, or whatever he could procure.

In the mean time, the officer, who had been looking for me, made his appearance in the hut, and proposed, in case of my passing the night there, to send me a few soldiers to keep me company. This was agreed to, and my asistente and three or four others were sent accordingly. I now set the men about making a fire, that they might prepare a supper out of some eggs which mine Indian host had procured me. But how these eggs were to be cooked, was another consideration. They could not be fried, for we had neither butter nor any thing else that

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could serve as a substitute; nor could they be boiled, for there was no salt, and, as one of the soldiers said, "El que come un huevo sin sal, se comeria à su madre," (He that would eat an egg without salt, would eat his mother.)

Scarcely was this difficulty surmounted, when another occurred. Night was coming on apace, and we had no candles, nor any other light but that of the fire, which was insufficient to enable me to make a memorandum of the incidents which I am now recording. I represented the case to mine host, and succeeded in making him comprehend that I wanted something to make a light with; but his answer was, as before, *managh*, *managh*. My asistente now hinted to me, that unless I used threats, I should never succeed, as nothing was to be got from an Indian by fair means. This, however, I refused to do, and it was all the better in the end; for while these remarks were being made, the Indian had hit upon the means of complying with my wishes. Making me a sign to wait a little, he left the hut, and returned soon after with a bundle of pine knots under his arm. One of these he kindled at the fire, and seeing it emit a bright and steady flame, he held it up before me with a smile.

It now only remained to devise some means of fixing this light in such a way as to render it unnecessary for any of the men to hold it while I was writing. This new difficulty was soon disposed of by my asistente, who, casting his eyes round, and seeing a little Indian about ten years old, who had put his head in at the door of the hut, and was gazing on us with a look of wonderment, went and seized him by the collar, and planting him beside me, said, "here is a candlestick." He then put the pine knot into the child's hand, and shaking his finger at him, bade him hold himself upright, and not to budge. The little fellow, who had already learnt to yield passive obedience to the white man, exhibited on the occasion the docility peculiar to his race; and there he stood for more than half an hour, as motionless as a statue, and almost afraid

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to breathe, while I was bringing up my journal. I have no doubt he would have held out two hours, but there was no necessity for making the experiment. On relieving him from his task, I put a real into his hand, and made him a sign to go. He gazed for a few moments at the coin, then clutched it with his little fingers, and without uttering a word, bounded out of the hut with the agility of an antelope.

I now looked round for a place to sleep in, and, to my surprise, observed that my Indian friends—father, son, and daughter—had disappeared, and left us in exclusive possession of their house. I could not help expressing my regret at having, as it were, turned the family out of doors; but the soldiers only laughed at me, and told me not to trouble myself about them, for an Indian could sleep any-where. I resolved with myself, however, to make them some amends, the next morning, by a liberal compensation. In the mean time, I disposed myself for rest on a hurdle of cane-reeds, covering it with my leopard's skin; the soldiers, spreading out their chamarras, stretched themselves on the ground.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

The Deserted Village.—The Gay Curate.—Anecdote of Indian Idolatry.—A Picturesque Country.—Village of St. Miguel.—Pensile Nests.—The Little Chapel.—The River Polochic.—Another Bridge of Curious Invention.

On leaving the hut the next morning, I did not forget the old Indian and his family, and we parted excellent friends, notwithstanding the inauspicious commencement of our acquaintance. I now joined Don Ignacio and the rest of the party, whose situation during the preceding night had not been much more enviable than mine: we mounted; and leaving the rancheria del Patal, proceeded on our journey. The road now led along the banks of a mountain stream, which tossed and foamed among the rocks as it pursued its winding and rapid course towards the vallies. This stream was one of the tributaries of the Polochic, a river in which, at the point where it becomes navigable, I proposed taking a boat to convey me to the Golfo dulce, and thence across the lake to Izabal. After a short, though wearisome march, in the course of which the stream had to be forded several times, we arrived at an Indian village called *Taltique*, where it was deemed expedient to halt for that day, though the distance travelled had been only six leagues.

We were not a little surprised, on entering the village, to find only women and children: the men had all disappeared; and even the curate had rendered himself invisible, for he was nowhere to be found. At length we succeeded in extracting from the women the secret of this general abandonment of the place, and learnt that the

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men, on being apprised of our coming, and apprehending that we were charged with a commission from the Government to raise recruits or to exact rations, had fled to the mountains, and that the curate, also deeming it prudent to shun our presence, had followed their example. Finding this to be the case, we gave them such explanations as fully satisfied them of our character and intentions. One of the women said the Padre was not far off, and that she would bring him in a twinkling. This conference was not sustained without much difficulty; the inhabitants here, as in all Indian villages, being but indifferently acquainted with the Spanish.

We now repaired to the house of the curate, and unloading the mules in the yard, sat down to rest under the piazza, which, as the door was locked, was the only accessible part of the house. The curate soon made his appearance, and with perfect cordiality and politeness welcomed us to his dwelling. He seemed disposed at first to conceal the motive of his absence, but he finally confessed that he had fallen into the same error as the rest of the inhabitants; and that as the agents of the Government, or those of Carrera, by whom the village was occasionally visited, were in the habit of making him the channel of their requisitions, he had taken the liberty to withdraw. He then directed arrangements to be made for our accommodation during the night, and some refreshments to be prepared for us. In the mean time, the fugitive inhabitants of the village had been relieved of their apprehensions, and were now fast returning to their homes.

We had every reason to be pleased with the padre, who joined us in our evening meal, and enlivened the repast by the wit and gaiety of his conversation. He could even play on the guitar, and sing, and was easily prevailed on to exhibit before us these unclerical accomplishments. He was an intelligent man withal, and full

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of information and anecdote. His illustrations of the Indian character were highly interesting, and his remarks on the propensity of that people to idolatry, both sensible and amusing. With reference to this subject, he related to us the following, among other anecdotes.

One of his predecessors in the curacy had detected his parishioners in the adoration of a god of their own. This was no other than an old Indian, whom they had dressed up in a particular way, and installed in a hut, where they went to worship him, offering him the fruits of their industry as a tribute, and performing in his presence certain religious rites, according to their ancient practice. His godship, who had no manner of work to do, and was regaled with all the good things that the village afforded, found this a sufficiently pleasant mode of life, and willingly sustained the character he had been made to assume. But such impious proceedings the curate was determined not to suffer. He remonstrated with his flock, and admonished them both in public and in private, but all to no purpose: he was listened to by no one; he threatened, and was threatened in turn. He now adopted another course, and affecting to approve the conduct of his parishioners, humoured them in the mad whim they had been seized with. It was that time of the year called Passion Week, when certain ceremonies are performed in commemoration of the sufferings of our Saviour on the cross. The curate proposed that the passion and death of Christ should be represented by the Indian deity in person; that he should have a crown of thorns put on his head, and be whipped and crucified. "After he is dead and buried," said the curate, "he, of course, will rise again, and then we will all believe in him."

The Indians were delighted with the idea, and, in their simplicity, determined to proceed according to the suggestions of their pastor. The old Indian was brought forth, and, *nolens volens*, was decorated with the thorny

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crown; he then received an awful flagellation, and, finally, in spite of his entreaties to be exempted from so great and unmerited a distinction, was actually crucified.

As soon as the poor Indian was fairly dead, they took him down, and carried him to the village-church, where, having laid him out, they watched him, and waited with intense interest for the third day, when he was to return to life. But before that day arrived, the body exhibited such symptoms of dissolution, and began to be so offensive, that the Indians already entertained doubts of the legitimacy of their god. They held out, however, till the expiration of the third, when finding that there was to be no resurrection, they dragged the body out of the church, and threw it on a dung-hill. From that time forward, they submitted with exemplary docility to the directions of their spiritual guide.

Our route the following day continued to be along the banks of the mountain stream before mentioned, which, as we advanced, became gradually broader, deeper, and less rapid in its current. The country we passed through this day was beautifully wild and romantic. Almost every mile brought to our view some novel object to arrest the attention, some charming landscape that the eye rested on with complacence. At one time, it was a gigantic forest of druidical antiquity, at another a shady grove; now a smiling little valley, and, anon, a stony ridge, where rocks and trees were heaped together in wild confusion. This, as I have before stated, is the general character of the country in Central America; but all the varieties of natural scenery were on the present occasion confined within a smaller space than at any other period of my journey. As they passed before my eyes in panoramic succession, the mind seemed to be under the influence of a charm, and forgot, in the pleasure of the scene, the fatigues of travel, and all care for the future or the past.

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Here and there, as we passed on, some rancherias or little hamlets occurred, and one or two haciendas; but we made no halt before reaching St. Miguel de Tucurù. This was a village situated in a hollow in the mountains, where a circular range of woods and sierras formed around a natural amphitheatre. The place, when we first discovered it from an adjacent eminence, looked so rural, so pleasant and secluded, that I readily agreed to stop there for the night; nay, I would almost have consented to pass there the remainder of my days. On our arriving there, however, these favourable impressions were in a measure destroyed by the absence of every comfort. The curate being absent in the performance of some of the duties of his calling, his house was shut up; that of the alcalde offered us no inducement for remaining in it; and the provisions the place afforded were but few and homely. In selecting our quarters, we had the choice of the church or the cabildo, both of which were open; but we entertained too much respect for the former to turn it into a caravansary, and took our lodgings in the latter. This was a commodious and substantial hut, consisting of one large room, with a corridor in front. A field hard by afforded excellent pasture for the mules; and, however we might fare, it was some satisfaction to know that our beasts were properly provided for.

At an early hour the next morning, we left the picturesque little valley of St. Miguel, and were again upon the road. After passing a rocky ridge, over a difficult and rugged path, and fording several small brooks, we came again to the stream, the course of which we had followed during the preceding days. This stream was now a respectable river; its banks were perfectly clear, or shaded only by lofty palm trees, growing at intervals, and the road was completely level, and clothed with a fine short grass, so that our mules were able to make more progress with less fatigue. The weather, too, was

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delightful, and there was that soft, balmy temperature in the air, which is peculiar to the month of May in northern climates. In short, so many favourable circumstances concurred to cheer us on our way, that our travelling this day was like an excursion of pleasure.

At one place, I was struck with the singular appearance of a lofty ceyba, or silk-cotton tree, that overhung the road, and from the topmost branches of which were suspended not less than fifty nests of the bird called oriole, already noticed in a preceding chapter. They were hanging by a mere thread, and swung to and fro in the air, apparently at the mercy of the wind; but only one had fallen. I stopped to pick it up, and was filled with admiration on observing the industry and ingenuity displayed in its construction. It was like a lady's reticule. The outside consisted of fibres or stalks of grass, and flexible twigs, so minutely and closely interwoven, as to form a tolerably compact web. The inside was neatly lined with soft moss and little flakes of wool and cotton. The opening at top was about two inches in diameter, and just large enough to admit the body of the bird.

Further on, another, and a very different object, attracted my attention. It was a little hut, like a shrine or chapel, surmounted by a cross, and ornamented, above and around, with shrubs and wild flowers. Within was an image of our Saviour, about four feet high, dressed in white, and girded with a sword!

We now came to where the stream, which we had thus far followed, poured its copious tribute into the river Polochic. In passing this river, we went over a bridge so novel and primitive in its construction, that it was decidedly the greatest curiosity I had yet seen. It was composed of the pendant branches of a tree, which, like those of the banian tree in the East Indies, grow downwards till they reach the ground, and taking root, grow up again. Of these branches, which, properly speaking,

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are only strong, flexible fibres, called in America *bejucos*, a great number had been woven together, so as to form a cable of considerable strength and durability. This was stretched across the river, and formed the floor of the bridge, while on either side of it, and about three feet higher, two parallel cables of smaller size, about the same distance apart, formed the banister, or railing. The space between the upper cables and the main one was defended by a net-work of bejucos of a smaller size. Some idea of this invention may be formed by comparing it to a long narrow book, half open. In passing it, we seemed to be playing the part of rope-dancers; only that, instead of a balance-pole, we had the side cables to aid us in keeping an equilibrium. We passed one at a time, and at every step we took, the bridge trembled from one end to the other. The mules had to be unloaded, and being driven into the stream, crossed it swimming. Their burdens were carried over the bridge by the muleteers: an operation that was not without its difficulties and dangers.

It was some time before we were fairly on the other side, and ready to pursue our journey. Meanwhile, I was agreeably occupied in contemplating the beauty of the natural scenery around me, which had very much the appearance of a theatrical decoration; for there, a broad deep river was flowing majestically before me in a serpentine direction, its lofty banks fringed with a luxuriant vegetation; a labyrinth of woods and mountains was visible in the distance, and, over-head, a sky of refulgent brightness spread a canopy of cerulean blue.

Notwithstanding the delay incurred at the bridge, or *puente de bejucos*, we performed that day a journey of eight leagues. We passed the night among a few huts, with few comforts to boast of, or, rather, with many inconveniences—hard beds, indifferent fare, and even some exposure to the rain. The weather, which, during the day, had been unusually fine, had changed towards evening,

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and a thunder-storm coming on, with lightning and heavy showers, lasted the whole night.

The morning of the next day was clear, and the atmosphere was much warmer, notwithstanding the rain that had fallen; we having now reached what is called the *tierra caliente*, or warm lands, situated nearer the level of the sea. After a ride of five leagues, chiefly through fields of long wet grass, we arrived at the town of Telaman, where my land journey was brought to a close.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

Departure from Telaman.—River Navigation.—The Canoe.—Alarm during the Night.—The Lake.—Arrival at Izabal.—Passage down the River.—The Echo.—Livingston's Village.—Balize.—Mr. M.—Attack of Fever.—Departure for Havana, and thence for Baltimore.—Arrival at Washington.—A Parting Word to the Reader.

TELAMAN is situated on the banks of the Polochic, at the point where that river becomes navigable. I found it a thriving little town, with something of a commercial air. I was provided, in the house of a ladino, with very passable accommodations. It was quite apparent that the inhabitants here had had some intercourse with foreigners and strangers, as several objects of luxury or convenience were to be found in their houses, such as I had not seen since my departure from Guatemala. In the house of mine host I was agreeably surprised by the sight of a rocking chair and a tea-pot, and hailed them as indications of my being again within the precincts of civilized society.

I now dismissed the escort, and made arrangements for descending the river. A canoe was engaged, accordingly, with three men to direct her course. This canoe, which had been scooped out of the trunk of a tree, measured thirty-two feet in length, and only three in breadth, and drew scarcely fifteen inches water. The after part was covered with a roof of canes and palm leaves, as a protection against the sun and rain. Two men sat in the bows with paddles, and another in the stern, who was both helmsman and captain: the baggage was stowed away in the bottom of the boat.

In this frail and unsteady craft I embarked for Izabal.

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There was a novelty, however, in this water conveyance, which, after so much travelling by land, was agreeable and refreshing. Stretched under the green awning of the canoe, I lay in a dreamy and abstracted state, gazing on the glassy surface of the water, or contemplating the beautiful scenery around, while my little vessel, borne along by the current, and propelled by the paddles, pursued her devious and rapid course down the windings of the stream. The banks of the river, on either side, were clothed with the richest verdure, and shaded by lofty trees, with branches projecting far over the water, while here and there a group of huts, or the house of some wealthy landholder, imparted an interest and variety to the scene.

In the course of the night, and just as a soft slumber began "to steep my senses in forgetfulness," I was awakened by a cry of alarm from the helmsman. The canoe had struck against a snag, or trunk of a tree stuck endways in the middle of the river, and, swinging round with her broad-side to the stream, was on the point of capsizing, when she was righted by the dexterity of the helmsman. I became at once aware of our situation, and dreaded the possibility of her going down before I could extricate myself from the awning over my head. This occurrence dispelled my sleep for that night. The next morning, about day-break, we passed a little settlement composed of foreigners, called Cajabon, and soon after came to the *boca*, or mouth of the river, which there loses itself in the great lake called Golfo dulce. We had now been twenty hours on the water, during which time the boatmen had scarcely allowed themselves a moment's respite from their labour; and we had travelled a hundred miles, which, including the windings of the river, is the distance from Telaman to the mouth of the Polochic, though in a direct line it is only sixty.

On entering the lake, a gentle breeze sprung up in the night direction, and a small sail being hoisted, the

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canoe glided swiftly over the water towards her destined port. This breeze, however, gradually shifting to another point, it was necessary to take in the sail, and have recourse again to the paddles. The boatmen now had to exert themselves, in order to reach Izabal before the sea breeze, which was coming on apace, became stronger; as in the case of the water rising into waves, the canoe, which was of so little depth, and had no keel, ran a risk of being swamped. Accordingly, we kept close in-shore, and paddled along patiently and diligently for the space of four hours, when we arrived at Izabal.

Don Valentin, who had so kindly harboured me on my first coming to the place, welcomed me back in the most cordial manner. It was the 12th of July when I arrived there, nine days since my departure from Guatemala. There was no opportunity then for proceeding to Balize, but one presented itself on the 15th, when I embarked in a small English vessel destined for that port.

The passage across the lake, and down the river to the sea, was as pleasant as it had been when I came. I had once more an opportunity of admiring the charming scenes of that romantic river, and was now agreeably surprised by a novelty which, in coming up, had escaped my notice. This was a remarkable echo, produced at that point of the river where, as I before observed, the bank consists of a flat, perpendicular rock, like a wall. Every word, and even a short phrase, uttered aloud, is repeated here with a clearness that is surprising. The experiment was made, and the repetition of the words was distinct and perfect.

On approaching the mouth of the river, my attention was attracted by a little village I had not observed in coming up; and with a mixture of surprise and pleasure, I learnt that the name of the place was Livingston. This was a compliment paid by the Central American Government to that distinguished statesman and jurist, whose criminal code had been adopted in the country, and whose

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character and talents were not less respected there than in the United States. The village consisted of only forty or fifty huts, but it had a thriving appearance; and some little trade was carried on there, as four or five small craft were at anchor in front of it.

Being compelled to beat up against the breeze-wind all the way, we did not arrive at Balize before the 19th. There was not at the time any vessel in port for Havana or the United States, and I saw no prospect of getting away in several days. This I regretted the more, from the apprehensions I entertained of the deleterious nature of the climate, and the imminent risk of being attacked by the fever. My first inquiries on landing, were about my former travelling companion, Mr. M., whose house, during my stay in the place, I proposed making my home. My surprise and sorrow will easily be conceived, when I learnt that he had died only the day before. In less than three weeks from his return he had been taken ill, and in five days after was conveyed to the cemetery. I met, however, with a good reception from my former acquaintance, the Spanish merchant, Don Francisco, who offered me a room in his house.

I now discovered that rest, after fatigue, is only agreeable for a short time. Accustomed, as I had been, to constant motion, and to a daily change of scene, my confinement to a particular place was irksome. I sighed for the woods and wilds, and for the variety and excitement of a traveller's life. I felt that there was a secret and irresistible charm in migration, and would fain have returned to breathe once more the pure air of the mountains.

In short, for eight days I was left in the full enjoyment of the *dolce far niente*, which I found to be rather wearisome. On the 27th I felt very ill, and the day after, the contingency I had dreaded was sadly realised: I was taken down with a severe attack of bilious fever. A physician was procured, and he proved to be a good one. I

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was in his hands for five days, and received three or four visits from him daily. But I will not occupy the reader with the details of my situation during this period. Suffice it to say, it was the most melancholy and unpleasant. The house I lived in, afforded none of the little comforts so desirable to a sick man—not even the means of making a cup of tea. I was left almost alone, and had no regular attendant, and no other bed than a cot, without a mattress. I felt certain that I was going to follow Mr. M., and my despondence and discomfort were beyond expression. Happily, on the 1st August I was declared out of danger, and on the 3rd of the same month was sufficiently well to embark in the Guatemala packet, that sailed on that day for Havana.

The winds were light and variable, but chiefly in a direction contrary to the vessel's course. Our progress was like that of Penelope's web, for we lost at night what we gained during the day. At length, after a tedious passage of fourteen days, we anchored in the port of our destination.

I was standing in the vessel's poop, and gazing at the shipping, and the houses, and the fortifications of Havana, as we entered the harbour, when I was hailed by name from a vessel that we were passing. It was the captain of the brig in which I had performed the voyage to Truxillo. Coming along-side the packet, he claimed me as his passenger on my return to the United States, and notified me that he would sail on the following day. To this, however, I demurred, for I was resolved on having one day of enjoyment in Havana, and would only consent to go on the day after. The captain remonstrated and entreated, and laid great stress on the responsibility he incurred by any unjustifiable detention of his vessel; but he yielded at last—as I knew he would—and on the 19th instant we sailed together for Baltimore.

The winds were variable, and the weather fair and plea-

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sant until the evening of the 25th, when we were overtaken by a dreadful thunder-storm. The sky was literally black with heavy dense clouds; the thunder was a continued roar; and the firmament seemed on fire. Yet there was scarcely any wind; but the sea rolled with a tremendous swell, and the rain poured down as if the flood-gates of heaven had been thrown open.

We encountered two or three other squalls before making the capes. At length we entered the Chesapeake. On the 29th I was in Baltimore, and on the 1st of September arrived in Washington, five months from the time of my departure from that city.

And now, gentle reader, we must part; our journey is at an end; but we may meet again. In the mean time, accept my acknowledgments for the patience with which you have followed me in my wanderings, and for the interest which perhaps you have taken in my adventures. In laying down this little book, let a spirit of generosity direct your judgment, and say, with Horace,

"Non ego paucis offendar maculis."

FINIS.

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